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THE Deepening STREAM

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By Dorothy Canfield

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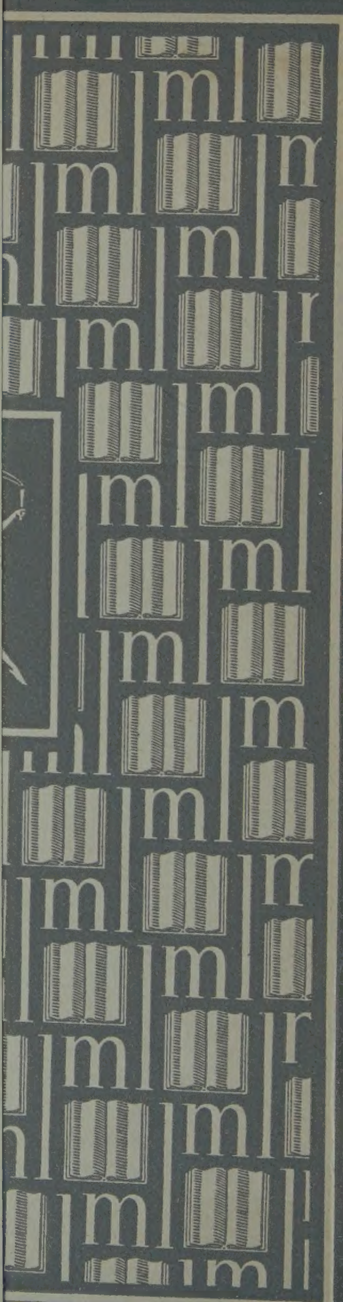

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THE DEEPENING STREAM

BY

DOROTHY CANFIELD

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DOROTHY CANFIELD

(1879-)

A NOTE ON THE AUTHOR OF "THE DEEPENING STREAM"

More than a century before the American Revolution the Canfield family had settled in the United States. Since 1764 they have lived in Vermont and have continuously owned land there, identifying themselves with the most progressive educational and humanitarian undertakings of that State. Dorothy Canfield's father was an educator, the president of two State universities. At the age of ten, Miss Canfield was sent to Europe for a year's schooling, and for all her life thereafter she has studied in France and in this country. She took her arts degree at Ohio State University, during the time her father was president of that institution, and later studied for her doctor's degree at the Sorbonne and Columbia University. In 1907 she married John R. Fisher and returned to live on one of the Canfield farms at Arlington, Vermont. From this ancestral home have gone forth a succession of novels, essays, short stories and miscellaneous writings that have had far-reaching influence on several generations of Americans. Among her best-known novels are her very first, *The Squirrel Cage,* published in 1912, *The Bent Twig, The Brimming Cup, Her Son's Wife, The Deepening Stream* and *Bonfire.* Active in many cultural spheres, Dorothy Canfield's work has carried her reputation far beyond the literary market-place and into the world of affairs, of learning and of high social purpose.

THE DEEPENING STREAM

PART ONE

I

When people talked about things they could remember Matey always wondered which kind of remembering they meant—the kind that was just a sort of knowing how something in the past had happened or the other kind when suddenly everything seemed to be happening all over again. Why did time fade out some memories so that they didn't seem any more real than a story in a book? And why were others, whether you liked it or not, a living part of you at any moment when they come into your head? These were among the many questions for which Matey never found an answer.

Perhaps it was the ring of Aunt Connie's old voice, usually so dim, which had hooked the first of these living memories into Matey's four-year-old mind. Yet that was always the end of the memory. With the last echo of Aunt Connie's word all the rest vanished . . . the pale dreaming sky, the wide bare river, the leafless spring trees towering over the moist sweet-smelling earth of the flower beds.

When some chance reminder made the contact which clicked this picture up before her eyes she was again the very little girl who, holding confidently to a cold, soft old hand, scuffed her feet unrebuked on the gravel path as she walked slowly beside Aunt Connie's billowing black, camphor-scented skirts. With the remembered smell of camphor came instantly the old knock at her heart . . . how *could* the tulips be there, finished, shapely, when the last time she had looked there had been nothing but a few skimpy, rolled-up leaves?

There they were, as much themselves, though so new, as Matey was herself. Steady on their strong stems they stood, seeming at Matey's "Oh!" to look off into the distance as though (she thought) they were trying not to show how proud they were of the surprise they had given her. What struck the small Matey was not so much that they were beautiful as that they were there at all so quickly! How ever had they done it? Dirt and stones and manure-stained straw lying at their feet. That was all they had to make themselves out of!

Matey's astonishment was too big to keep inside her. But she could not get it out without saying something, and she didn't know any words that fitted. The hand which held her little fingers always gave her what she wanted. She jerked imperiously at it, tipping her head back to peer up into the bitter withered face above her. It was looking at her now with tenderness. But Matey was only four years old. She took the tenderness for granted.

"Oh, Aunt Connie!" she cried, her mind full of her own feelings. And then because she still could think of no word which fitted the tulips she could only cry again, longingly, "Oh, Aunt *Connie!*"

Aunt Connie had known at once a word to say. She cried out, "Incredible!" She said it queerly, not in her usual quiet voice, but almost roughly. It sounded to Matey hardly like a word at all but like the sudden noise a feeling makes inside you before you can think of a word when you get knocked off your sled on a hill or see the Christmas tree for the first time.

It was so strange for old cross silent Aunt Connie to have a sudden loud feeling that Matey was startled. She did not dare to look up again but made herself small, bending her head to look fixedly at the tulips. They seemed in the instant she had glanced away from them to have turned their faces toward her.

Matey knew from the sound part of what Aunt Connie's word meant. It meant that something you hadn't thought possible was really so.

But what was it that Aunt Connie hadn't thought possible?

For an instant, every time this memory came, just before they all winked out into the dark, it seemed to Matey that the tulips looked wise and conscious as though they knew.

This was the instant which did not die like things forgotten nor, like most remembered things, shrink and dwindle into something so much less than itself that it could be put into littl words. No matter how long an interval passed between the in frequent times when Matey was reminded of it the memory always sprang freshly into life, as big as all outdoors, just as it had been . . . the sky as lofty, the Hudson as broad, the tall old leafless trees life-size; yet all that bigness less than the bright flowers which stood looking with a wise intentness at the little girl; while Aunt Connie's voice, like a gust of wind, shook the trees as it shook Matey's heart, and carried its cry out across the wide bare river. It never stirred a petal of the tulips.

2

THE children had honestly thought, at least Priscilla and Francis had, that they were quite sure of the path up Izcohébie Hill to the look-out rock. Matey had thought nothing about it. She was nearly six—two long years of life had passed since she had stood with Aunt Connie, looking at the tulips beside the Hudson so far from her now—but she was still in the age which takes no responsibility about finding the right path.

Also they had honestly meant to keep their promise to Dominiqua about not leaving the right path for an instant. Leave it? Priscilla had laughed and asked Dominiqua how far off the path she supposed anybody *could* take Matey's short legs through that prickly *genêt?*

Matey needed no commands from her big sister to make her hold the exact middle of the winding trail as she trotted after her elders. The tall broom on each side bristled furiously with what Matey called when she was talking English "stickers," and when she was talking French *"piques,"* though Francis told her that wasn't right in either language. She turned her head from one side to the other to look at the prickly stiff green bushes. Like rough sprangling-branched little trees they were, millions of them, every one separate. How different *genêt* looked when you saw it through the window of Dominiqua's house in Biriatou, the smooth carpet of its yellow blossoms laid like seamless silk, fitted to every roll and shoulder of the hills. You wanted to lean out from the window and stroke your hand over a mile or two of that soft gold.

Of course, after these weeks of staying with Dominiqua, she knew what broom was. She had known all the time that the shining gold which she saw out of the windows was nothing but *genêt,* with skinchy little blossoms not so very big any of them, not such an awful lot of them to any one bush. She couldn't say that it was a surprise to see that the soft gold velvetiness was made of something just the opposite, prickly and rough and dark; but it did make many thoughts for her—dim six-year-old thoughts that were mostly feelings.

"Here we are," said Priscilla from on ahead.

Matey was glad to know they were there. Her legs were tired and her stomach was empty. She could see Priscilla against the sky already running up on the look-out rock, the wind blowing her fair hair and fluttering her short skirts.

She saw Francis scrambling up the rock. And now Matey herself was at the foot of the bowlder. The others shouted down patronizing directions where to put her feet. *She* knew where to put her feet! "I want my *goûter,*" she said rather crossly, as soon as she was up beside him. They wanted their *goûter* too. Priscilla was already getting it out from the paper bag.

For a time they gnawed and chewed and swallowed hard, in silent blissful gluttony, seeing distinctly the big brown crusts and nibbled-at lumps of chocolate, and dimly the distant blue sheet of the ocean to their left and the heaped-up Spanish Pyrenees to their right. Yet, even while she was still reveling in the mightiness of her jaw-muscles setting hard on their bones as they triumphantly brought her teeth together through the hardest crust, Matey was noticing that, there! the *genêt* blossoms had all melted together into one shining sheet of gold again.

But the outlines of what she saw began now to blur, as everything awake in her let go in the first loosening of drowsiness. Francis and Priscilla were talking about the view like grown-ups. "That little scriggle of dirt-color must be the road from Hendaye to San Sebastian. When Father and Mother came up here they said they could see clear to Bayonne." But their voices were to Matey's deliciously dulled ears like the hollow murmur of an echo.

She could not rouse herself even when they gave her oh, such a rare and priceless chance to show off, by wondering if this was the place where the witches were supposed to gather, nights. Matey could have told them. Being too young to do lessons, she spent her mornings hanging around the kitchen and back terrace, where she heard more witchcraft and black magic stories than Priscilla and Francis dreamed of. She could have pointed out—Dominiqua's aunt had pointed it out to her dozens of times—the very valley up which, as soon as the dark began to fall, the demons flew in from the sea on their leathery wings to join the witches on Izcohébie, leaning down to snatch the souls of any innocents whose mother left them out after dark. But it was bright daylight now; witches and demons couldn't do anything as long as the sun was up.

"You mustn't go to sleep there, Matey," said Priscilla responsibly, her eye catching the limpness of her little sister's arms and legs. "You'd roll off. And anyhow we must be starting back."

"I wasn't going to sleep," said Matey, nettled, sitting up and stretching.

And then they were lost!

Of course it couldn't have happened like that. They must have been following paths through the *genêt* for ever so long—several hours perhaps—before Matey knew they were lost, for when she did, the sun was quite down. But her memory included none of what happened in the late afternoon. Probably she had trotted along, still in a golden half-sleep, still blandly unquestioning the wisdom of those who led her, the green walls on each side of the path sliding by, sliding by.

But she was awake—quite—when Priscilla and Francis stopped and stood still. It was awful that in spite of the terrified look of Francis' back, the path was so narrow they couldn't huddle together, but had to stand in single file. All Matey could do was to wiggle past Francis till she was between him and Priscilla and had caught her sister's hand.

"What'll we do?" said Francis, his voice trembling. Now that Matey was around in front of him she could see that his face looked even more frightened than his back.

Priscilla did not answer. For one horrible never-forgotten instant Matey thought Priscilla was going to be scared, as scared as she was, as Francis was, crazy scared. It was not just being lost, like getting lost in the woods at home, bad as that would be. It was being out alone at night on Izcohébie Hill.

Matey looked up into the grayness over her head. The wind was rising and making long, awful rustlings as it swept towards the top of the slope. A stray gust fumbled coldly at her hair.

Terror flung itself at the door of the little girl's heart, rattling and shaking the latch. Her lips were parted to let out a shriek, when Priscilla spoke. She said in her ordinary Priscilla voice, "It won't hurt us any, even if we have to stay out till morning. It's warm, nights." Oh, rocklike twelve-year-old courage! Oh, great-hearted big sister! The panic clattering at the door of Matey's heart reeled back a step.

But was Priscilla only pretending not to be scared? Matey longed frightfully to be sure that Priscilla was not, deep inside, afraid of . . . of . . . what Matey did not dare even to think of in words, lest the rapidly darkening sky turn into . . . into . . . she longed so terribly to know whether Priscilla was really afraid that she dared not ask.

She took another way to find out. She dropped Priscilla's hand, put her arms tightly around Priscilla's waist, and pressed her little body as hard as she could against her sister's. No, Priscilla did not feel afraid.

"Oh, ouch! *aïe!* Matey!" she said. "You're squeezing the wind out of me. Let me go, for goodness' sakes!" No, Priscilla did not sound afraid. Her voice sounded beautifully natural and cross.

The panic terror at the threshold of Matey's little heart shrank further back. The whooshing of the wind died down from being a shriek to a great humming sound, and that was partly in Matey's ears as her blood unfroze and began to trickle along its usual channels. She looked up adoringly at the older sister as she went on, "We must have made a wrong turn and got into a sheep path. But we'd never find the right one now. If we tried we'd probably just get farther and farther away. We'd better stay right here till they come to look for us. Dominiqua'll be sure to raise the roof when we don't come in. You know how scared she is of anything happening to us while Father and Mother are away. I bet she gets the whole village out."

Because of the humming in Matey's ears she did not hear a word of this. But she heard the sound of it perfectly. The sound meant that they were safe as long as Priscilla could talk in that sort of voice.

The relief made Matey feel faint. Her legs gave way under her and she sat down, dragging Priscilla with her.

"That's a good idea," said Priscilla. "We've got a long wait, perhaps. Sit down, Francis, and rest your legs."

Francis sat down as close to his sisters as the crowding prickles would let him. Crouched there, on the ground, their heads were quite below the surface of the broom. Above them, Matey could hear the wind loudly blowing the blackness up the hill. It did not touch her now. Night had quite fallen so that she could see nothing at all, not Francis as he lay up against her, not Priscilla, although her arms were still around her. But, though she could not be seen, all of Priscilla was there, solid and warm and breathing, stronger than the mortal wickedness roaring over their heads.

"Oughtn't we holler a little to let them know where we are?" said Francis. His voice was still trembling. Matey moved a little to one side, not to take more than her share of Priscilla.

"Oh, they wouldn't have got out so far from the village as this, so soon," said Priscilla, reaching around back of her waist and undoing Matey's hands. "You'd better let go of me and curl up your legs so you'll be more comfortable, Matey. You'll probably drop right off in a nap. You were half asleep up on the rock." She pushed the child down till her head rested on what small lap was made by Priscilla's short cotton skirt. It was enough for Matey. She let Priscilla do whatever she would with those warm sisterly hands. But as to going to sleep . . . with that panic creeping closer! She saw him plain . . . the lean demon sprawled face down on his dark cloud spreading out his arms as he swept overhead, stretching out his stringy arms to clutch at the hair of any helpless child out under the night sky. . . .

Dominiqua's voice sounded in her ears. . . . "They can smell innocence, the fiends can, as flies smell meat, and flock to it—children after baptism and before they have lived long enough to commit any deadly sins—that's the age—"

That was Matey's age. . . .

The black wind stooped lower, fumbled with long stringy arms in the broom. By this time the air above them must be filled with evil spirits, lying out along the wind, drawing the ragged clouds around them, their devil's eyes gleaming through.

Matey's start of horror woke her up . . . she had almost dozed off, even the part of her she had left on guard to remember what it was that kept her safe . . . for an instant she did not know what that was. Quick! Quick! before she died with terror . . . what had it been that had made her safe? There *had* been something, hadn't there?

Her hand, clawing out in the dark, clutched something, something knobby and hard and warm . . . Priscilla's knee. Oh, yes, it was all right, Priscilla was there. The blood ebbed languidly back into her sickened body. She laid her head down again on Priscilla's lap. My! but she was tired!

Was Francis all right? She felt in the dark for him. Yes, there he was, on the other side of Priscilla's other knee. He felt warm and limp and sound asleep. Oh, dear big sister!

"Don't nestle around so, Matey," said Priscilla's voice through the darkness. "Do get yourself in a comfortable position and *stay* there!"

What could the powers of hell and the demons of all evil do against a Priscilla? Nothing. Nothing.

To that refrain and to the now very distant murmur of the night wind, Matey fell soundly asleep, this time with all of herself, just as she did in her bed, nights. She left nothing on guard. Priscilla was on guard.

So sound asleep was she that when she woke she was inexplicably in bed, back at Biriatou in her nightgown, the sun shining on Dominiqua's sleek hair and kind face as she stood beside the bed, holding her black-eyed baby over one shoulder.

When she saw Matey's eyes open, she stooped to kiss her, saying, "I'll run get your chocolate, it's all ready on the fire."

Matey lifted a face of stupefied wonder from her pillow. There through the window stretched the old smooth miles and miles of golden blossoms. On the edge of his bed sat Francis, bright and glowing, just as usual. Priscilla looked around from the table where she was writing, a smile in her eyes. "Well, Matey," she said, "you're a seven sleeper all right. It's ten o'clock."

No, the rescue was no part of the memory for Matey, although she heard from others a great many times all about it. How, sure enough, Dominiqua had raised the roof and got the village out with lanterns, and how she, Matey, had slept through it all, even when Dominiqua's husband picked her up and carried her—even when Dominiqua undressed her and put on her nightgown.

"Just like a sack of meal you were," said Francis, laughing.

She could remember none of that. But it took her an hour or two that morning, after she opened her eyes, to subside into her usual rate of living. Her mind went right on recording sharply the commonplace impressions of an ordinary day, as vividly as it had recorded the roar of the black wind over the *genêt*. Part of the memory of being lost was the anxious look on Pris-

cilla's face when she said, "Now, kids, look here. Don't let's tell Mother and Father about getting lost. Dominiqua would get blamed like everything. *You* know Father would. . . . Will you keep still? Promise."

Sure they would. Matey had less than no wish to talk or think about that night. And it would be meaner than dirt to get Dominiqua into trouble over something that was no fault of hers. If Father came back from the trip to Italy as cross as he'd been when he started, he'd be sure to make an extra fuss over anything that would help show that it had been silly to go . . . and all Mother's fault for wanting to. Matey's experience of life as a whole was limited. Her experience of her parents, however, was quite sufficient to let her foresee this result. Over her bowl of chocolate she nodded seriously. Francis said with emphasis, "Gracious, no! Absolutely not a word!"

The two elders applied themselves to their lessons. Matey got herself dressed and loitered sleepily down the stairs to get another *tartine* of bread and jam. Dominiqua evidently had her usual visitors. Matey could identify each staccato voice. Probably, she thought, they were saying how wonderful American children are, not to cry and get excited when they are lost, but to stay calm and . . . What they were really saying as she went into the kitchen plucked her sleepiness roughly away. "Why, Maï Iturbe's boy, not eleven yet, went last week, a day's journey, and the path not half so well marked. And did he lose his way like these babyish foreign . . ." Seeing Matey come in, they stopped hastily and smiled down at the little foreigner with a kind-hearted unadmiring pity.

Matey was only six, but she had lived long enough with herself to scringe, even before she felt it, at the pang which she knew was aching itself into her mind. She knew this pang. It hurt. She snatched up hastily one of her usual weapons against it. As she watched Dominiqua spreading jam on her slice of bread, she tried to think with all her might that Dominiqua was nothing but an ignorant cook, and that nobody cared whether she looked down on you or not. But alas, as usual Matey did care.

She moved away. But even leaning on the low stone wall which ran around the far side of the garden terrace, she could still catch echoes of their lack of admiration. She chewed loudly to drown out their voices. She swallowed hard, trying to swallow down the heaviest of her discomfort with her bread and jam. By and by, she listened cautiously again to the tick-tick-ticking of the talk.

". . . every seventh year," said Dominiqua's voice, once more getting it all wrong about Father's sabbatical. She was saying again that all Americans worked hard for six years and fooled around the seventh—getting paid for it into the bargain. Well, let her. It never did any good to tell her it was only college professors who were allowed to do that—and this year wasn't even a "sabbatical," just a leave of absence without salary—and Father had worked like a dog writing text-books to pay for it.

Now they began to talk about something else. Matey couldn't make it out at first. About somebody who had been very brave, although so young, who had gallantly played the part of a real little man, had comforted and quieted his frightened sisters—and then hadn't bragged about it afterward. In fact it had been hard work to get him to say a word about himself, as it always was. Matey made it out now, all right.

An angry impulse sent her running toward the kitchen to tell them what Francis had really . . . but halfway across the garden she stopped short. She stood still. Something was again the matter inside her. She bit hard through her *tartine* of bread and jam, and chewed thoughtfully. To tell on Francis . . . ? Wouldn't that be—well, wouldn't it be sort of like what Francis had done, the other way around? Yes, it would.

With a sigh she turned back and went again to lean on the wall. It was strange, but that inner heaviness and misery was gone. Oh, goody! For the first time since it had begun she felt quite light and comfortable inside, and fell happily to watching an ant fetch and carry to a tiny anthill between the cracks of the stones.

Presently Francis came running out to play ball. "I've got my verb learned," he called defensively to his small sister, tossing his *pelota* up on the sloping roof of the cow-barn and catching it as it rolled down and off.

Matey was only six, but she knew that the women watching him from the kitchen were thinking how graceful the little boy was, and how beautiful his sunny hair looked, tossing about in the wind. It *did* look nice. Priscilla looked out of a window and saw him leaping in the sunshine, a small smile on his face.

At once she drew in her head and came running out on the back terrace. "See here, Francis," she said seriously, speaking in English so that the people in the kitchen wouldn't understand, "you really *mustn't* tell Father and Mother."

Francis turned his clear blue eyes on her, pausing as he leaned his supple spine backward to launch his ball. "Why, *I'm* not going to tell them," he said in a surprised voice.

He threw the ball and ran nimbly to catch it.

Priscilla walked up close to him. "Francis," she said in a threatening voice, "if you ever *do*—I'll tell Father and Mother about the time you . . ." She said the last words so low in Francis' ear that Matey could not hear them. She heard very distinctly, however, Francis' quick answer. "Why, of course I won't tell them. Didn't I say I wouldn't? What in the world makes you *think* I would?"

Would Priscilla say what in the world made her think he would? Matey's heart shrank together. But of course Priscilla wouldn't. Couldn't. From under her dropped lids Matey could see that Francis went on briskly throwing and catching the ball, and that Priscilla stood a moment longer looking at him. Then she turned around and went back into the house.

Well, what else could she do?

What had Matey encountered on Izcohébie Hill which had driven that long memory so deeply into her mind? Into her mind alone. For when a few years later she had grown up enough so that she could speak of it, she was astounded to find that Priscilla had forgotten their being lost.

"Were we?" she said vaguely.

She thought of talking it over with Francis, but on second thought decided not to. He *had* told—the next time he had needed something to divert Father's attention. And Priscilla hadn't told on him. Matey had known she wouldn't—and so had Francis—even while she was threatening him.

This was a nighttime memory, one of those that never come to you at all in daylight, but when you get about so far asleep, start to unroll themselves in the dark. All at once Matey would not be flat on her bed, but trotting unquestioningly along the winding path behind Francis and Priscilla, turning her head from one side to the other to look at the tall green bushes, thinking busy little thoughts about how different it looked when you were down in the midst of it . . . all those millions of separate little trees, rough, dark, the blossoms so scattered and few. . . .

3

SOMEWHERE between that first memory at four and the next one at six, Matey had stopped being a baby and had begun to be a person. The process continued during the following seven years of school life at Logan Bluffs.

Not that there was any traceable connection between growth and her school life. The public school building where year after year she spent six of her waking hours was only a block away from her house, and yet when she walked through its doors she might as well have walked off into another planet. It was as far away as that. It was farther away than that. On another planet she would have gone on being herself. It was a little as though she stopped breathing when she went into her schoolroom and began again as she passed out. She was not Matey there, and to the real Matey waiting outside, she took back in return for those six hours nothing but the queerest collection of scraps—not even of ideas, only of impressions.

Years afterward, when she thought of her school days, what came to her mind, after a picture of her own battered desk in this or that classroom, and the blackboards and dingy books, and the frowsy hair of a little boy who sat ahead of her in the fifth grade, was a photographic reproduction of gold glittering in the front tooth of one teacher, of elegant white ruching sewed in the high-boned collar of another, of wisps of hair straggling down at the back over the cords of a thin neck from a badly adjusted back comb, of the tightness of stout woolen stuff strained over a corseted waist; of the beauty (never equaled by any later jewelry) of a cameo pin on blue velvet; of the grotesque, self-willed stylishness of huge stiffened sleeves. These bits of various teachers stayed with her. The rational explanation of subtraction —all the rational explanations so carefully expounded—vanished forever as soon as she had recited on them.

And yet it would not be fair to say that Matey learned nothing at school. She learned how to hide and dim and dull her natural wonder about the huge whole of which she saw so minute a corner. She learned how not to try to understand what is hard to understand, but only to learn how to use it. And the capacity to shut parts of life off from other parts, to live in pieces, this was a branch of learning not listed in the school syllabus, but thoroughly acquired in those classrooms. Matey learned it well.

Once outside the school *donjon,* life ran free and full. Full and free ran the current of play into which the children plunged. They lived for play. There were interruptions of course, and not only classroom hours. Precious time had to be wasted on a few light household tasks assigned to them, or, worst of all, before the piano. Such intervals were endured with the forced resignation which wilts to passivity travelers waiting for a train at a junction.

What was this "play"? What did the children find to do in all those hours after four o'clock till bedtime, not to speak of blessed Saturdays? Why, what do human beings find to do all day long when they are in love? Or how do they get through the hours when they have stepped off from the deadliness of everyday life into the enchantment of a religious conversion?

Matey and her comrades were mystics of play. They were in love with games.

They had more games to play than there was time for, because like the gods on Olympus they wearied not of familiar joys. When they had run through all the ones they knew, they started over again, with as sharp-toothed an appetite as though they had just begun. But they seldom needed to start over.

There were great games that needed a dozen or twenty children, loud dramas like "Run, sheep, run!" or prisoner's base, and "Red rover, come over!" In these each child, shrieking and running with all his might, felt his single personal excitement magnified by the screams and agitations of his fellows beyond anything he could have achieved alone. In others the excitement ran deep and silent, as in mumble-de-peg, and jackstones and marbles, played by a silent group squatting or kneeling on the earth. There were in-between games, like duck-on-a-rock, in which moments of hovering suspense alternated rhythmically with explosions into the same sort of communal screeching and racing about, which made the children so love "What'll you do when the Black Man comes?"

For rainy days when play must be carried on under cover, in barns or attics, there were eerie games of ghost-like silence, variations on blind-man's-buff. "Still-pond-no-more-moving-I-give-you-three-steps!" screamed out the blindfolded "it," all in one many-syllabled word. At the end of the formula, the other players, fleeing for their lives, halted in their tracks. A barn full of children scattered about, and not a sound. As far as the senses of the blindfolded player could tell him, the world was as empty as before Creation. Into this silence the "it" ventured out, feeling his way with his feet, groping with his hands. Sometimes he stopped, listening intently, within a few feet of a wild-eyed child pressing his hands over his mouth. Sometimes, taking a chance, he sprang forward at random, flinging his arms out wide and bringing them together on whatever he found—vacancy, or a fellow being.

There were moments when Matey was "it" when, almost strangled by the obscuring handkerchief, she knew the bewildered thought, "Oh, if you could only *see* . . ." but of course, she knew well enough, if you were not blindfolded there would be no game.

When you were not "it" but one of the statue-children, you never could remember in the least how the lonely "it" felt—roaming blindly in vacancy. You had no room left in you for anything but the frightfulness of your present situation, only three paltry steps between you and this incalculable Destiny with hooded eyes. Those endless seconds when it stands within reach of you, when you have used up the last of your poor three steps and by the rules of the game must stand defenseless to take what comes! And that sudden shrinking together in noiseless terror when the hooded hunter springs straight at you!

Once in the early days when Francis was not too grown up to play with the kids, he thought of an ingenious variation on the game. While the blindfold was being tied over the eyes of Skid Lathrop, who was "it," Francis in rapid dumb-show explained his plan. He touched his chest, he waved a hand to include the whole group standing about him on the barn floor, he pointed to a broad beam about shoulder high across the end wall. Yes, yes, they all nodded understanding. They had caught the idea. In the moment of running allowed while the "it" was calling out the formula, they all dashed to the beam and swarmed up on it.

That game was one of the things Matey did not remember, but lived over again whenever she thought of it. Francis' strategy was successful. The "it" did not dream that the other players were not as usual about him. Perched on the beam, clinging like swallows to the rough boards of the wall back of them, the silent children, in perfect safety for once, looked down on their blindfolded comrade, going through a grotesque pantomime of befooled activity on the empty barn floor—creeping forward, his head bent to listen intently, stopping short, dashing suddenly to one side with outstretched arms, calling out, "I hear you," in the old ruse to trick a child into some audible movement. All this with emptiness about him.

Francis' face was half-hidden by one hand as he stifled his laughter. His blue eyes sparkled. Most of the other children were following his example. The antics of the deluded blindfolded Skid were too ridiculous. Absurd and self-deceived, he careered about, snatching at nothing, listening fatuously to vacancy. "Now I've got you!" he cried, foolishly, dashing ahead and closing his arms on nothing. Francis doubled forward in a paroxysm of silent delight.

Matey sprang down from the beam on the loose floor boards with an audible thud.

"I hear you!" shouted Skid, darting towards the sound. Matey had not yet taken the three steps to which she was entitled by the rules of the game. Nor did she now. She stood still her eyes on Francis, her head flung up, while Skid's hands ran over her, looking for some identifying mark. There were few. Starched percale playdress—all little girls wore those. Cotton stockings and stout buttoned shoes—any child on the block. Long hair braided in two pigtails. Might be any eight-year-old out of half a dozen. How about hands? Calloused palms, rough hands that seldom wore gloves and had often clung to tree branches and thrown baseballs. Like anybody's hands. But here was something different—long, long fingers and knuckle joints that melted as you took hold of them. "It's Matey Gilbert!" he proclaimed instantly, snatching off his bandage.

"Well, Matey, you're a great one!" cried Francis, scrambling down with the others. He came up to his little sister, out of patience with her. "You spoiled all the fun! We weren't doing anything against the rules! What'd you do *that* for?"

Matey did not answer because she did not know why she had done it, except that it would have made her sick not to. She looked stubborn and closed her lips tightly. Francis said, "Must be you're stuck on Skid." For a moment the other children hung about listening to this family quarrel, and then with their unerring instinct when play was concerned, knew that for the time being the virtue had gone out of Still-pond-no-more-moving. "Come on, everybody, let's play Cops and Robbers . . . last fellow to Warren's maple tree'll be the cop." They were off, Matey scampering as madly as the rest.

In Priscilla's day, only six years before, little girls had stayed indoors and played with dolls, or sat passively on the porch rocking like the grown-ups, and listening to their talk, but by the time Matey was old enough to run, public opinion had advanced with such a rush that only old ladies thought it tomboyish for the more active of the little girls to play with the boys up to adolescence—and there were extremely few old ladies in that young town. So it happened that Priscilla's mind became colored by the accumulation, vast beyond reckoning, of impressions made on it by sharing her parents' life, while in Matey's little girlhood they tinged only the few hours spent away from school and from games. For from her sixth to her twelfth year this life of play made up the vital part of Matey's existence. Her small body—and her mind—became strengthened, hardened and toughened by it to a vigorous, insensitive vitality like that of a little savage. She acquired a profound respect for the principle of fair play and for stoical endurance. Most of the other Matey qualities, good and bad, stuff of sorrow or joy, lay weakly curled up in embryo, giving Matey twinges of feeling which she neither recognized nor welcomed. There was very little time left over from play for the exploration of personal emotions. Every child in good health played as hard as he could till he was ready to drop. And then he went to bed. At eight o'clock, "recall" was sounded from every back porch. Not always from the Gilberts', Matey's mother having more on her mind than most of the housekeeping mothers on the block. But when the other children scattered to their tepees, Matey knew playtime was over. Breathing rather fast, she came scampering in from the dusk, her eyes glowing like those of a romping kitten, her hair tousled, often sparkling with dew, nothing inside her head but pictures of the game just finished.

After the sweet freshness of the outdoor air, the lighted living-room felt thick and stagnant with people's breaths. Often enough it was still heavier with a hot something she was beginning to recognize. It was usually Priscilla's taut expression that told Matey things had not been going smoothly. Sometimes she could guess from the tone in which she was spoken to where the trouble was. "Have you learned your geography lesson?" or "Don't forget to brush your teeth." These were neutral remarks, but they were colored by the prevailing tone and gave her an accurate account of how everybody stood. If it was Father who asked about the geography lesson and if he asked it in a certain harsh voice, Matey knew he had not come out on top. If it was Mother who spoke about brushing teeth with a certain resentful heat in her tone, Matey guessed that she had once more been made to seem of less importance than Father. If by chance Matey had been there all the evening like Priscilla, she too sometimes tried timidly and awkwardly as Priscilla did to smooth things over, and felt as Priscilla looked, taut and strained by bedtime. But when she had been out to play she saw her family as through the wrong end of the telescope. Long before she could have unfocused and refocused her attention on any particular emotional crisis, the impetuous fatigue of a young playing animal would have dulled her eyes. She could have fallen asleep on the floor like a kitten. Still, although she brought in from play enough of its air to protect her somewhat, it was safest of all to find, as she often did, some sort of social goings-on, a card party, a rehearsal of a scene from one of Professor Marlin's plays, or even callers sitting around. For then she was sure of getting comfortably to bed, skimming safely along on the smooth surface of company manners. Once in her own room she dropped quickly off to sleep without any of the wakeful period of tossing and soreheartedness over echoes of tones and looks which generally followed a quiet evening at home with the family. After a bout of hide-and-seek, it was all she could do to keep her eyes open long enough to take off her clothes and get into her nightgown.

Fainter even than her contact with her own family was her sense of the reality of the rest of the community. Somewhere in the back of her mind was registered a sort of composite picture of the other children's fathers and mothers and the houses they lived in. It furnished a perspective through which she saw life.

Nearly everybody—banker, carpenter, plumber, professor, grocer, butcher, doctor, storekeeper—lived in badly-built comfortable two-story wooden houses, painted gray or brown. These homes were all supplied with a pleasant front yard of lawn-mowered grass, and a back yard of scythe-cut (if at all) weeds, occupied by a clothes-line, a barn, a chicken-house, and a small vegetable garden—well kept if the family in that house were of foreign extraction, ill kept if they were of pioneer American stock, still expecting shortly to move on again. There were practically no fences dividing these lots from each other as in the older towns of Ohio and Wisconsin. Each square block made by intersecting streets was like one large roughly cared-for flat field, with houses, barns, and young cottonwood trees scattered about on it.

Over this territory, like a pack of young dogs the playing children scampered wildly with nothing to stop them. Certainly there was nothing in the minds of the elders to stop them. Nobody could have conceived of any reason for limiting their devotion to play, except possible harm to property. What else should children do? What *was* there for them to do? No one on the porch so much as turned his head when "it" screeched his wild warning cry through the twilight:

"Bushel o' wheat!
Bushel o' rye!
All that ain't ready
Holler out 'I'!"

No one paid more attention than a distant nod of recognition when the porch itself was invaded by a panting hunted child darting up on tiptoe to hide behind a grown-up's chair.

After supper, "Can-I-go-out-to-play?" rose in every dining-room. It was a mere formula. It meant, "I am going out to play unless I am stopped," and it was followed—in spite of occasional grasping but usually futile grown-up efforts to get some chores done by the children—by a running dive out of the kitchen or dining-room door into enchantment.

There were always children around, who met like meeting drops of water. To the yelling and shouting of the game which they instantly started, flocked all the other children as soon as they were freed—freed from sitting respectably at table to eat, from helping wash dishes or mind the baby, or from a spelling lesson to make up. Encountering in the twilight a group of children madly scattering, a newcomer needed but to shout, "Who's it?" and "Where's the goal?" and he was ready to turn and to race as madly as the others, his heart contracting in the terrible joyful anguish of the pursued, although the moment before he might have been sadly emptying out the garbage pail.

A foreigner would have thought them completely abandoned by their elders. But he would have been mistaken. Any child at any moment could be fished out of the sea of play. Their apparently lawless freedom was governed by one ordinance. No child under any condition was to "go off the block" without permission. A call from any porch could reach the children wherever they were. "Your *mo*ther's calling you!" had a certain fixed speech-tune to which it was always sung, preordained by tradition.

Moreover the children were always either audible or visible to the mothers, who, as they worked inside their homes or sat on the porches sewing, watched over the playing children with as unforgetting a reflex faithfulness as that of the sentries of a grazing herd jerking their heads up after every three bites to make sure that all is well. It is true that nobody even glanced out of a window so long as the shrill chorus of screams was audible, near or far. But if a silence fell, the inmates of the houses, no matter how absorbed in their own affairs, soon looked to see what was happening. If there was no visible explanation of the silence in the shape of a mumble-de-peg or jack-stone group, mothers stepped out. One called to another, who passed it down the line, "What are the children up to?" Almost always a reassuring bulletin was passed back, such as "They're in Schaumberger's barn playing still pond." By the unspoken tradition Mrs. Schaumberger then became special guardian. She knew exactly how much noise and how frequent bursts of it were natural to that game, and if there were not enough, felt herself called upon to go out unobtrusively on an errand to the barn. That a silent child meant a child in mischief was an aphorism of all those parents.

It was the other way around for the grown-ups. With the exception of a very few academic and professional families, the grown-ups on any block were silent enough. Life for them was work, as life for the children was play. When they stopped work at traditional resting-times it was as though they stopped living.

They sat indoors in upholstered "stationary rockers," their eyes fixed on the newspapers held up in front of them, or they sat outdoors in wooden or wicker rockers on the front porch, their eyes fixed on nothing at all. Either way, silence was a by-product of the hour.

Sometimes they recognized their dullness and felt depressed, but for the most part they thought they were too tired to do more than sit in a peaceable quiet in their own houses, rocking and letting the drained-out pool of energy fill slowly up so that they could go back to work the next day. The disagreeable sensation of stagnation was averted from the men by the occasional attentions needed by pipe or cigar, from the women by crocheting or darning.

These sagging grown-ups did not purposefully thus create vacancy about them in their leisure hours. What was there for them to do which would be interesting enough for people of their age to pay for the exertion of doing it? The block was divided into children who played for their lives, and adults who worked for their livings. Such elders cast a reflection into the lives of the children. Not only of their own, but of all the hard-playing throng streaming around them like a school of swift small fish, flashing about barnacle-covered barges. The children could not help seeing that the grown-ups were not having half "such a good time" in their off hours as they. Half? There was no comparison. Day is not merely twice as bright as night: it is something different. The children saw this and knew that the grown-ups saw it too. Their own instincts told the children that it was a great pity to grow up and stop playing and go to work. Since the grown-ups thought so too, there could be no doubt about it.

Once a man left behind him at the end of business hours the grim interest in exacting work, he saw nothing for it but to give himself up to resignation. But resignation could not shut his eyes to the vitality of the child who darted quivering out of the twilight to hide behind his chair. At the sight of it, his own middle-aged flesh felt lead-heavy on his bones.

Envying the children their passionate enjoyment, they sat heavily in their rockers, their cigar-tips red in the twilight, the kindly bored wistful fathers on the block, carpenter, plumber, butcher, storekeeper, grocer, too conscientious, too tired, too responsible to look for passionate enjoyment in whiskey and women, the only grown-up sources of it of which they had ever heard. They envied the playing children, and out of the love for them which was perhaps the deepest joy in their own lives, they pitied them, because every day was taking them farther away from the best and happiest passage in human life.

4

IT COULDN'T last—such Arcadia! Day followed day and a thousand gossamer threads of familiarity and custom drew Matey closer to her family circle.

It was a perfectly lovely home, and she was a mighty lucky little girl to have such a fascinating father, such a wonderfully young-for-her-age mother . . . such wonderful parents both of them! . . . and such a perfectly wonderfully interesting family life! Matey heard this so many times from enthusiastic student guests that she came to know by the expression of their eyes and lips when she was about to hear it again. "Such perfect manners!" "And you can *speak* French!" Matey and Priscilla took speaking French as much for granted as having clothes to wear, but it greatly impressed the untraveled inland young people of Logan Bluffs. "What a liberal education for our boys and girls just off the farms, to listen to such brilliant conversation!"

In a way it was an education for Matey too. Without asking any questions, merely by listening when she couldn't dodge, she learned the answer to many a problem which had always puzzled her.

One rainy evening when she hadn't been able to drum up a single playmate in any of the usual rendezvous she came disconsolately home and found Professor Marlin sitting with Mother by the living-room lamp. Nothing extraordinary in that. They were always endlessly discussing plans for some sort of a show they were getting up. Matey sat down on the sofa, resigned to wait the required civilized interval before escaping to her room. Father was leaning back in his arm chair and talking. That was a little unusual—not that he was talking—but talking to Mother and Professor Marlin. Matey remembered one visit when he hadn't lifted his eyes from his book, and another when he had got up and said, "If you charming people will excuse me, I'll run over to Chandler's and try to do a little serious work on my department." But she never remembered seeing him join in the conversation as if he were enjoying it.

"Ever been in Italy in August, Marlin?" Father was asking.

Professor Marlin said apologetically that he hadn't—in August or any other time.

"Well, take my advice and don't. We did once, and believe me or not, I'd gladly have changed places with any of the seven thousand nine hundred and sixty-seven representations of St. Lawrence in his martyrdom I looked at during the three hundred and forty-three actual measured miles of gallery floor we walked over that excruciating fortnight. . . . Oh, I knew it was a foolish venture, but not how foolish—imagination failed! We were quite comfortable in a little *trou* on the Basque coast, but Jessica had promised a friend . . . a *very dear friend* . . . Mathewson of the art department out at Millerton . . . you knew I spent some miserable years there, didn't you . . . trying to inject a little appreciation of the Grand Siècle into the solid Nordic ivory headpieces of Nils and Olav and Olga. Well, Mathewson was a fellow sufferer, weary of casting Giotto into the feed-trough, and we joined forces . . . especially Jessica . . . *you* know how ardently she throws herself into any novelty! And the upshot was that she solemnly promised to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land of the Quattrocento as soon as she could. So there was no help for it."

Professor Marlin remarked that even with the heat it must have been a remarkable experience.

"Oh, quite," Father went on, "but not exactly what Mathewson had led us to expect. *Il faut souffrir pour être belle*—or to appreciate painting. But the dear man had omitted to warn us how much suffering was necessary—not to speak of the number of fleas one collects per kilometer or the mosquitoes on the Grand Canal or the aroma of Italian open plumbing. And to cap the climax, when we got back didn't we find that the 'jewel' to whom Jessica had entrusted the children had taken her cares so lightly that she'd let them get lost and wander all night halfway to Spain."

"Why, Morris Gilbert, of all the preposterous misleading exaggerations!" broke in Mother hotly.

But protests against Father were like throwing stones into a stream. They made a splash but had no other effect. He flowed on, "Oh, I admit they came to no visible harm. But think what might have happened . . . for that matter we found out about it quite by accident . . . Heaven knows what catastrophes we never discovered . . . however, perhaps it was all worth while. We acquired endless culture. Just by chance I came across our old volume of Vasari this evening . . . it brought back so vividly those evenings at the pension when Jessica used to read it aloud. I thought I'd repeat the experiment tonight. . . . It will remind us of our old interests—of our old friend Mathewson."

"You'd a good deal better save your voice for your public lectures, Morris," Mother broke in briskly. "At the last one some people at the back went out while you were speaking. I don't think you can fill a large hall the way you used to—or maybe they get tired hearing you quote so much French."

Matey saw her Father's eyebrows twitch. His eyes started roaming around the room. Her stomach contracted just as if "it" were reaching out a hand. The eyes rested on her.

"Little daughter," he said with a smile, "in the way of real education, there's of course no comparison between our talk and your text-books, but the silly world still clings to its examination shibboleths, and your natural flair for geography is hardly robust enough to see you through without occasional study . . ."

Matey waited for no second hint.

Another thing you learned from living with your family was not to blush and wriggle when you were being talked about Matey got lots of practice, for as the youngest child she was naturally the central figure of some of the best-remembered family reminiscences. She got tired of hearing them over and over again, but it was always sort of interesting to watch Father fixing them as he went along and trying all his little tricks and manners to make them go off better.

"The last time we paid a visit to Rustdorf . . ." he would begin. Then he would give a little start and go on in a different tone, as if a new idea had just struck him—though he always did this part the same way—start and all, "But, I forget, you don't know Rustdorf. Don't feel apologetic. The joke's not on you. The other way, I assure you! How can I make you see it? Rip Van Winkle might have been its first mayor. If he came back today, he'd be reëlected—unanimously. To speak grandiloquently, it is the ancestral seat of my family and my wife's. To speak realistically—the most torpid pool of stagnant humanity to be found on this continent. Also it used to be the home of my Aunt Constance. She's difficult to do justice to—unless"—here he would wrinkle up his forehead and look quizzically around the circle—"unless you've known some one of the sort in your own families. My Aunt Connie was one of those amiable people who had it in for the world because it hadn't given her what she wanted. All her brothers had been allowed to follow the light as God gave them to see it—doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief—whatever took their fancy; but when she made up her mind that she wanted to be a woman doctor, her family met in convocation and fell into fits, and told her to get herself a husband and some babies. Well, what would you expect? She was born too soon. Let me see, when was she born? Matey was born in '83, and Aunt Connie was as old as the hills then—she must have seen the light before 1810. How could she expect any family in a moldy Hudson Valley town of that period to allow a daughter to be so unwomanly as to study medicine? Knowing the lady, I judge that she put up a pretty stiff fight; but it did her no good. She was never allowed a penny to carry out her wild ideas, and when she finally survived her elders and inherited the family strong box, such as it was, she was too old to begin. So, as I said, she got back at Fate by hating the human race in general and her relatives in particular. And yet when one summer little Matey was sent back to Rustdorf—we had measles or something of the sort in the house—didn't the old Gorgon appear to be quite softened—actually to take a shine to her, or so we fondly imagined."

Here Father would make a long pause, smile broadly and say, "I shouldn't go on, really, and exhibit the skeletons in our family closet, but it was such an absurd fiasco—our one attempt at legacy-hunting. Well, the fact is that a year or so later, my wife's strong maternal instinct decreed that we should pay at least a short visit to the old homestead, so that if there *should* turn out to be anything left to bequeath . . ."

Somewhere along here, Mother would rustle in her chair till people looked at her. Then she would purse her lips and slump down her shoulder, as if to say, "It wasn't a bit like that, but what can *I* do?" And Father would arch his eyebrows, and twist his mustache in a way that made it clear that of course his way was right, but if Mother felt ashamed of the truth he wouldn't be mean enough to insist . . . and go on, "Well, suppose we just say that for some reason or other we did go to Rustdorf, and that our reception was less cordial than we had hoped for. To warm things up a bit, it occurred to Jessica that a little showing off of the infant prodigy was in order. So one evening at table she said, 'Matey, are you learning to spell at school?' Matey said, yes, she was; but when her mother asked her to spell cat, she shook her head and stopped her mouth with mashed potato.

"'Why, Matey, darling,' said her mother, 'you must know how to spell *cat*.'

"'No, honest,' said Matey, looking as brightly intelligent as a horseblock.

"I was making signs to her in dumb-show that I'd spell it to her with my lips, but she paid no sort of attention to me. Jessica was frantic, and Aunt Connie was looking around and around at all of us with those gimlet eyes of hers.

"'Why, child,' said Jessica, 'I thought you were reading little stories with lots of words in them.'

"'Oh, yes,' says Matey, as cool as you please, 'I know how to spell it at school, c-a-t. But I didn't know for sure that it spelled itself that way at home.'"

At this there was always a shout from the audience. It seemed to Matey that the story itself didn't amount to much compared to all the introduction it needed, but she always joined cravenly in the laughter. So did her mother. For somehow the way Father told it made it as necessary for Mother to laugh as for Matey. Priscilla only looked with a shadowed face from her father to her mother. The laughter always rose to a howl when Father, twisting the end of his mustache between his fingers, with a judicious reflective air, brought out, "Need I add that Matey was *not* remembered in Aunt Connie's will?"

Somehow it must be funnier than she could understand, for Mother liked to tell it too. Only when she did, Matey noticed, she said it was Father who suggested the visit and the spelling show-off.

But what Matey found out for herself about behaving was as nothing compared to what Priscilla taught her. Priscilla was the realest person in her life. She not only loved and depended on her sister, but they were room-mates, so that just in the matter of time spent together Matey saw much more of her than of Father or Mother or Francis, who were all, as Matey was, absorbed in their own interests, meeting for the most part only at meals.

All during the early part of her life, when Matey didn't know what to do, she consulted her older sister; not in words, for things obvious enough to be put into words are seldom very puzzling, but by noticing what Priscilla did. After a time, as Francis grew up into a tall handsome boy in high school, people began to talk to her about that perfectly charming big brother of hers, and Matey looked at Priscilla to see how to answer. Her sister went right on using the same replies that Matey had always heard her use when people said those older things about their perfectly lovely home and so on. She smiled brightly back at them with her company face, murmuring in her company voice one of the company formulas, "Oh, you're very kind," or "How nice of you to say so." So Matey followed suit. Closely watching her almost grown-up big sister, the little Matey learned other transition formulas, which varied only in accordance with whether it was Mother's or Father's evening in the spot-light. "There are some good seats left right near the folding door. Professor Marlin is going to pick the final cast for *The Winter's Tale* tonight. Mother's trying for Hermione. Isn't it exciting?" or "Let me find you a chair up near where Father is going to read?"

After one of these "informal unpretentious open-house evenings," Matey and Priscilla were always too tired to do more than undress and get into their respective beds without so much as saying good night. To the last minute Professor and Mrs. Gilbert, and later Francis, stood brilliantly at attention, looking their most vital, shaking hands with their guests. Along with them, the two parlors, even the dining-room across the hall, in spite of its after-refreshment frowziness, kept up the enameled brightness suitable for the occasion, to the very moment when the front door closed on the last guests.

It was astonishing—used though Matey was to it—how instantly haggard and ill-natured the very chairs and curtains looked after this effort. The sofa pillows, especially, looked as she felt, as everybody acted, crushed into shapelessness by the pressure of others on them, all their professional soft pluminess packed into hardness and lumps. Francis, leaping up the stairs in long bounds, was always on the top landing before the last guests were off the front porch, and inside his room with the door shut before the family stirred and breathed. Sometimes he was called peremptorily back to do his share in the "picking-up" which Mother insisted on. But often nobody had the energy to shout up after him, and then remember whether he had come or not, and shout again till he appeared. Priscilla often said, "Never mind, I can easily stay up a little longer. I'm not a bit sleepy."

Matey reveled in the admiration with which the Gilbert guests repaid the Gilbert hospitality, but she certainly did not enjoy the picking-up. Nor the breakfasts of the morning after. She early learned that company manners are not to be had for nothing. Yes, she and Priscilla dreaded those breakfasts. At least Matey did. Priscilla never said whether she did or not.

Matey had indeed, during those Logan Bluffs years of intimate sharing of every smallest detail of physical life, very little idea and not a great deal of curiosity as to what was going on in Priscilla's mind. Her moods were those of an adolescent while Matey was still in the Stone Age of childhood. Priscilla was often silent and preoccupied. Matey adjusted herself to this inattention as naturally as she did to the queerness of grown-ups, or to the vagaries of the weather. She had a guess that these silences were not happy ones, and she even made a half-conscious connection between these moods of Priscilla's and her habit of looking anxiously from her father to her mother and nervously trying to smooth things over. But Matey was still a little girl and when her sister was silent and moody, she generally thought no more than that Priscilla wasn't so much fun as she used to be.

When Matey had "home-work" to prepare for school, the two girls often sat of an evening studying their different lessons at their tables on opposite sides of their bedroom. Sometimes Matey would feel that Priscilla had stopped looking at her high school text-book and was looking at something invisible to Matey. The stillness between them that had been quiet and studious became tight and strained. Matey too stopped looking at what was on the page of her book, although she still stared hard at it. When, as often, Priscilla's head slowly drooped lower and lower till her face was hidden in her arms on the table, her little sister dared not seem to notice, much less ask for an explanation.

It did not seem strange to her that, though she and Priscilla loved each other dearly and lived as closely as two sisters could, there were all sorts of things they did not talk over, or even mention, or even recognize by a look. That habit of family life had been set too long ago for Matey to imagine anything different. This did not at all mean that the Gilberts were a silent family. Quite the opposite. Their admirers said their home was one of the few in which real conversation was carried on. In the light of this repeated saying and of the home talk with which she was familiar, Matey defined conversation to herself as talk intended to cover up what you were thinking about. If it gave you a chance to show off, so much the better. Not knowing any other, she accepted this definition matter-of-factly, and quite approved of it, being very well aware that it would be no fun for anybody if what you were thinking about showed through the talk too clearly.

Thus, when Priscilla's eyes were opening for their first long look at life, as far as she could guess at it, she was to the rest of the family a child living with grown people. In her own room she was a grown person living with a child. She was never alone, and she lived in a perfectly lovely home and in the midst of a Christian community of at least twelve thousand souls; but Matey's big sister might as well have been solitary on a desert island at the moments when she could no longer endure what seemed to lie there before that first long look ahead into life, when shutting her eyes she laid her young head down on her arms, drawing a long defeated sigh that echoed forebodingly in her little sister's heart.

It was not that no attempts were made to help her. On the contrary her parents, noting how pale and thin she was in her senior year at high school, did all that parents possibly could do. They took her to the doctor.

He conscientiously gave her an examination, although he said to begin with he was sure an examination would bring to light nothing but what he knew already, that the only trouble with Priscilla was that she had been growing too fast. Oddly, nothing else was brought to light by his examination. He prescribed cod-liver oil and a tonic that had iron in it.

But in spite of oil and iron, Priscilla did not gain either in weight or spirits. She continued to be very "nervous," often looked tragic, occasionally burst into tears. It was all quite according to the most traditional pattern of troubled adolescence.

The family reaction to the situation also followed traditional lines. Priscilla's father tried to raise her spirits by a play of wit about her "soul-symptoms" and "growing pains," but with little success. Priscilla received his sallies in an ungrateful silence. "Their feet and hands may grow to full size in adolescence before the rest of them," he often remarked with irritation, "but, by George! their sense of humor remains embryonic."

Mother did not joke with Priscilla about her unsteady nerves. She never joked anyhow, and in this case she had another theory as to what would help her daughter. "If you would only throw yourself into something worth while!" she used to say earnestly. At that time, "something worth while" clearly meant the University Dramatic Club. Between them, she and Professor Marlin had fairly swept the faculty circle (not Professor Gilbert, of course) into their enthusiasm for dramatics as an alleviation to the dumb inexpressiveness of American civic life. Rehearsals were then going on, gathering momentum every week, for an outdoor performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the first of its kind, the beginning of Professor Marlin's famous career, it afterward turned out.

Mother was absorbed by the enterprise, not only by her own rôle of Helena, but by the endless labor over costumes, scenery, rehearsals, quarrels, changes of parts, which fill the last weeks before a dramatic performance. As the date of the play drew nearer, Matey noticed that instead of needing to wait the usual moment until Mother could get her mind on what you were saying, you now spoke two or three times before you could get her attention.

"Same old cycle," grinned Francis behind her back. He was trying, with some success, to form himself on his father's conversational line. "I can remember her back in Millerton, just as dead to the world when she and Mathewson were getting up an exhibition of Copley prints."

But for all that Mrs. Gilbert was a careful mother, and often enough she looked anxiously at Priscilla's downcast young face. One morning at breakfast, "See here, Prissy darling," she said urgently, as she said most things, "you're the color of a tallow candle and you haven't eaten one mouthful of your oatmeal. Do try to eat regularly, that's a good child! You're growing so fast. I'm sure that what you need is something to take you out of yourself—an absorbing interest. I *wish* you'd go in for dramatics! There's a rôle vacant now. That Nelson girl has flunked out two studies and has to leave college. She was going to play

Hippolyta. Why couldn't you take her part? It's not long to learn."

Priscilla shook her head and murmured that she didn't feel like acting.

"How can you know unless you try?" Mother's tone was changing from tenderness to eagerness. "It's going to be such a success! The rehearsals are going better and better. Mrs. Conrad's brother is visiting her, and he said last night that he was really astonished to find so successful a communal effort toward dramatics going on west of the Mississippi. He thought it a revelation of what might be done in other towns. He promised to write an article about it in his paper. And he's a *New York dramatic critic!*"

Matey hardly heard what she said. A premonition made her start bolting her oatmeal at top speed. Father said nothing, ate his orange with attention, but as he sat stirring the sugar into his coffee, something about his eyes, fixed reflectively on his wife's happy animated face, made Matey decide that she didn't want any more oatmeal and would better get her finger-exercises off her mind.

But the piano was only in the next room, and as Matey sat before it, she could see from the corners of her eyes the rest of the family around the breakfast table in Saturday morning leisure.

"Aren't you about through with rehearsals?" asked Father finally, sipping his coffee delicately.

Matey knew from the look of him, from the tone of his careless voice, that Mother was in danger. But Mother never did, apparently, until it was too late. She answered him now, honestly, earnestly, literally, "Oh, *no!* We're determined to give our very best to it!"

"You haven't an illusion, have you, that rehearsals from now to Doomsday would make the acting anything but amateur?" remarked Father, smiling and looking down into his coffee cup.

Mother knew now something was in the air. Her pleased enthusiasm turned to resentment. "At least there's a difference between good amateur acting and poor!" she answered hastily and hotly.

"Oh, dear!" Matey scringed on her piano stool. There was the opening Father was looking for. She hoped he wouldn't see it. But of course he did, he always did. And never withheld his hand.

"*Is* there, really?" he inquired delightedly, edging his tone with a false brightness of surprise, driving his neat thrust deep home by a pleased ironic movement of his lips, very familiar to his family.

Matey saw Mother flush darkly, saw the look of helpless anger blaze up in her eyes, heard her begin clumsily, "I notice there's no question of 'amateur' when *you* are the one who wants to . . ."

She stopped abruptly and looked across the table. "Well, Prissy, how about it?" she said with forced brightness. "Can I tell Professor Marlin you'll try for Hippolyta?"

Priscilla said nothing, but she stopped looking at her mother and father and began to finger her napkin. From her down-dropped eyes the ever-ready tears began to flow.

Mother put out her hand with an affectionate gesture of anxiety. "Prissy dear, do *tell* Mother what the matter is?" Matey heard ever so faint a tincture of impatience in the energy of the voice. So did Priscilla apparently, for she pushed her chair away from the table and ran upstairs.

Matey saw Francis grin as, reaching across the table for Priscilla's oatmeal, he began to whiten it with sugar. She heard her father explode irritably to her mother as he folded his napkin, "What's the use of asking her what the matter is, Jessica? *She* hasn't any idea!" He took a drink of water, and gave the quick turn to each end of his mustache with which he expressed exasperation. "It's a phase that all families with children have to live through, I suppose. But I'm free to admit that it'll be a glad day when she outgrows it. She's about as enjoyable an element of domestic life as a wet sponge lying around wherever you want to sit down."

He added, "Of course she'll be all right as soon as she outgrows it . . . when she begins to have her share of beaux, probably."

Mrs. Gilbert said earnestly, "I *wish* she'd try dramatics, I know it would occupy her mind."

Matey's fingers had not, during this talk in the next room, stopped their regularly timed treading up and down the keys. But somewhere inside her was a click. Ever since Priscilla had begun to act queer, a mechanism in Matey had been registering how other people took it. That impression was now complete. A timeclock was set, ready to sound its warning bell six years from now, when Matey would be Priscilla's age, or whenever she began to feel queer, if she ever did. "No matter how queer you feel, you must not show it. Not to anybody, c,d,e,f,g—g,f,e,d,c," went Matey's fingers, arching their necks like proud little horses, conscientiously pawing at the keys as hard as they could without making the wrist stiff.

"Matey, do you know, you sound as though you might have a nice touch on the piano," said Mother, passing through the room with her hat on, looking stylish and filling the air with purposefulness. She went on to her rehearsal, leaving her words behind her. For two or three days Matey had been looking for something to lighten a persistent heaviness caused by Teacher's praise of Lena Weingartner's beautiful handwriting. Would this do? She examined it in her mind as she slid down from her stool. But she knew beforehand that it wouldn't do. Not that there was anything the matter with it. Except that Lena hadn't heard it. Although in moments of madness Matey herself sometimes told the Lenas about such things, she was always set upon and shamed so fiercely by another part of herself, that she was worse off than in the beginning. She never could manage it neatly as Francis did. She had plenty of troubles of her own, Matey had, without taking Priscilla's on.

She ran into the yard, taking care not to go to her room, because she knew Priscilla was there, perhaps still crying, and sitting down in the swing, began to push her feet vigorously against the earth. She swung forward and back, faster and faster, till, just as she had hoped, she had pushed the idea of Priscilla off and away, and was thinking of nothing but the flight up and down, with the fascinating sickness at the pit of her stomach on the downward swoop. It is not alone table-manners and English which are learned with no effort by unconscious imitation of one's elders.

Sure enough, as Father had predicted, Priscilla did get over it all right, thus proving how sensible they had all been not to get excited. Her way out seemed to be tennis rather than beaux. At least tennis was the only suggestion the doctor made that did any good. For after her graduation from high school, Professor and Mrs. Gilbert, anxious to neglect no possibility of improving their daughter's health, took her once more to the doctor. It was much against her will.

"*I* don't want to see the *doctor!*" she told her father when he spoke of it. She said this in a high uncertain voice as if the idea were not the most reasonable one in the world.

"Well, my dear child," said Professor Gilbert, in the tone of imitation patience which goes with that phrase, "if you can suggest anybody else who you think is more likely to help you back into a normal state of nerves . . . ?"

His daughter looked at him. Finally, "No, there isn't anybody," she said in a flat voice which her father thought self-consciously tragic.

"Well . . ." He tried to go on being patient. No, it was too much! "I don't believe a doctor or anything else would do any good in your present mood," he rapped out dryly, and left the room.

Mrs. Gilbert drew her daughter close. "Prissy, darling," she said, "you mustn't take this time of your life so hard. It has nothing to do with your mind or soul—no more than a toothache. It's only the changes that are taking place in your body as you grow to be a woman. Your nerves haven't got used to them yet. That's all. If you keep your physical health good, all these ups and downs that you think are emotional will soon pass off. Now do remember this and take it more calmly!"

She had been determined at all costs to be kind, but in spite of herself impatience pushed its way into the intonation of the last sentence. She had not intended this, but perhaps it was just as well to give the child a glimpse of what a nuisance she was making of herself.

Priscilla looked fixedly at her mother during this speech and at the end of it replied, at once, with no expression in either voice or face, "All right, let's go to the doctor."

The doctor this time suggested that plenty of outdoor exercise might be a good thing for Priscilla's lack of appetite and sleeplessness. Tennis was a new game then, just beginning to be talked about in the Middle West. Some of the younger professors at the university had achieved a court on the campus that spring, and during the summer it was open to the resident faculty families. Priscilla threw herself into the game. Her devotion to tennis became as desperate as her face. She played all day long, every day, with any one who would stand on the other side of the net, doubles or singles, and when no one else was to be had, stood in the torrid Middle Western sun, beating the ball against the wooden fence at the back of the court and returning it furiously on the volley.

And still she did not sleep very well; she was nearly always reading in bed when Matey dropped off in the evening, and several times when Matey woke up in the middle of the night, she found Priscilla's lamp lighted and her sister propped up against the pillows, a book open before her. Once, when Matey woke up, there was no lamp lighted in the room, but the moon was shining enough to show Matey something that startled her very much. Priscilla was kneeling by her bed, her hands clasped, and crying. Matey was a little shocked as well as startled. They went to church once in a while; indeed some of them went nearly every Sunday, in order to have somebody in the Gilbert pew because of Logan Bluffs' disapproval of non-church-goers. But who ever heard of getting up in the middle of the night to pray? It made her feel very uncomfortable to hear Priscilla sobbing. She wondered if Priscilla did this other nights, when she slept through and didn't hear her. It was, because Matey was only half awake, like a bad dream.

Indeed the next morning, seeing Priscilla now burned by the sun to saddle color, muscular and active, beating the tennis ball heartily up against the back fence, Matey thought it certainly must have been a dream.

It was at any rate a dream she never had again. Shortly after that September came, school absorbed much of Matey's time, Priscilla entered the freshman class at college, and threw herself into university life as into tennis. Every one said she was much improved. She had been a sober, responsible child with eyes that looked rather too deeply at people to be quite pleasant. And she had shown few of the social gifts so marked in her father and mother and brother. But, as often happens to growing girls, a marked change in her character seemed to begin as she emerged from adolescence. Little by little during all of her freshman year she grew more animated, talkative, like other girls. Her parents were relieved by the gradual emergence into a normal condition of a child who had caused them some anxiety. She no longer looked anxiously from one to the other, because she was seldom with them. Somebody was always calling her up on the telephone to go somewhere, or she remembered that she had something to look up in the University Library, or a date to keep with some one. In her sophomore year she was elected vice president of her class. Her health seemed quite normal. By her eighteenth birthday she had at last become a fitting adjunct (with the exception of a rather restless manner) for her perfectly lovely home.

5

When Matey was thirteen, Father's sabbatical year came along, and it was spent in France of course, for the sake of his studies. In planning for it, the family had wondered what they could possibly do in Paris with Matey, who was still very much of a child, while Priscilla at nineteen was quite, and Francis at seventeen was almost, grown up. But the problem solved itself. Matey was provided for and her family left free for all the occupations they had feared she would interrupt. For Priscilla it was almost like a "coming out," as those wander-years in foreign pensions and hotels often were for Anglo-Saxon young ladies before there were so many of them abroad. She was, it is true, "taking courses" at the Sorbonne; but they were the open lecture courses, given by the fluent professors, popular with lady listeners, courses where you went when you pleased and took notes or read novels—just as you liked, and nobody knew or could tell on you.

Thanks to this free enlightened lack of supervision, Priscilla managed to pursue her studies without seriously interfering with social activities. Several young American students were dangling around her, getting up excursions to "do" the cathedrals, museums, and cafés. A good deal of what was then called "serious attention" was paid to her. Everybody thought she would be engaged by spring. One of the young men was sure she would be. Matey heard her parents talking about this prospect quite with approval. But Priscilla did not become engaged. She liked her young suitor very much. But—when it came to the point—no, she didn't want to be married, she didn't want to be loved, she didn't want to be talked to about momentous matters. She went through a maneuver which she was to repeat many times. She laughed him off, she laughed off her parents.

When discussion of serious feelings of any kind was imminent —at the first look which threatened it, Priscilla began competently to create the mood in which only small and cheerful feelings can be spoken of. Her eyes set the note. Like her talk, they were sparrow-quick, bird-bright, always warily on the lookout, always hopping briskly just out of reach.

Only Matey, still Priscilla's room-mate, ever saw a different expression in them. Sometimes, half wakened from her first sleep by the entrance of Priscilla, in from same gay evening, Matey lay in bed, watching through half-closed eyes the sister who did not dream she was being observed. What struck into the little girl's heart was Priscilla's expression as she sat before the mirror, brushing her long fair hair. The young face before the mirror gazed deeply at the young face in the glass as it never looked into any other human eyes, and the reflected face looked darkly back.

Matey felt the impulse to say something kind and loving—but what could she say that would do any good?

To every one else Priscilla was a finished and successful young lady. Her father was proud of her and liked to show her off, not only to the Americans whom he knew, but to the French families who had grown up around the friends of his student days. Yes, it was considered on the whole a successful year for Priscilla even if she did act childish about her first suitor.

It did not seem to be a good year for Francis. He was in a boys' *lycée*, supposed to be doing the regular school work, and he certainly spent most of his waking time there, the hours of school attendance being cruelly long. But as far as any one could see, he learned little beyond a quite astonishingly idiomatic command of spoken French, which he already knew familiarly. He wrote it abominably, so badly that his father, who naturally took correctness in French very hard, was outraged. And his monthly *carnet de notes* brought marks from his teachers in all his subjects which made Professor Gilbert ask his son, angrily, "Don't you ever look at your lessons? What do you *do* with yourself from eight in the morning to six at night?" Francis always faintly smiled at such questions and preserved a silence which his father considered insubordinate. Matey, pursuing her unconsidered youngest-child way, often heard things not intended for her. Once that winter she heard her father say to her mother, "Just when one child gets through the detestable age, another falls neck-deep into it!"

As to Father and Mother—Father's main occupation seemed to be going to the Bibliothèque Nationale, doing, Matey supposed, the something-or-other which professors do in their sabbatical years. He was enjoying it greatly, whatever it was. He always seemed twice himself during a sabbatical year in France.

Mother—Mother was just the opposite. She hardly seemed like Mother when they were in Paris. She had, with her immense energy and determination, learned to speak French with correctness, but she had not so good an accent as the rest of them. It was unbelievable, the difference that made. Matey could not understand why it seemed to add so enormously to Father's advantage over Mother. Such a little thing—how you pronounced your r's! Why should anybody care—let alone permit it to darken the whole sky?

Mother wanted very much to make a visit to Germany and Austria that year—or to Scandinavia—or to Greece. But this time she couldn't have her way. Father's manuscripts, or whatever, were too exacting to allow him to get away for more than short trips. Matey's heart was heavy for Mother, and at first she wished they could please her by going out of France for a time. But once that winter they all took a flying trip for a few days up to Holland to see the Rembrandts and the Vermeers. After that Matey was quite willing to have them all stay in France. Father's state of mind over the figure he cut, stumbling and making gauche mistakes in a language he wasn't sure of . . . it was *terrible!* Matey didn't know how they lived through it. How small they made themselves—all but Mother, who hid a smile—whenever Father tried to put a question to a policeman or a tram conductor. And as for the awful day when a gentleman in The Hague stopped them and asked something in Dutch, too fast for Father to guess at a word . . . even as it was happening, even as Father, red and furious, rejoined his family, obviously wishing they had all been dead rather than there, Matey recognized it as stuff of one of the things she couldn't bear to remember. She began to cram it down into the black hole in her mind where she tried to hide such memories. When they crossed the frontier back into France and Father could begin speaking his beautiful French again, she drew a long breath as though she had escaped from a danger.

But such experiences, indeed any intimate contacts with her family, were rare that winter. One of Father's old student friends, now a professor in a *lycée,* had married a music teacher who in spite of the arrival of four children had always gone on adding to her husband's small income by giving piano lessons. As soon as the Gilberts were settled in Paris, Matey began to take music lessons from her. Then, as it was impossible for her to practice on the piano in the cold stuffy salon of the small hotel where the Gilberts lived, an arrangement was made for her to practice on the extra piano in the Vinet apartment, the battered, old (but always scrupulously tuned) piano that stood in the bleak "children's room." The small sum which this brought in was very welcome to the Vinets, who were hard put to it to pay for the luxury of four children on the salary of a professor in a *lycée*.

The Vinet children, at least the three older ones, Henri, Mimi, and Ziza, were usually in the children's room doing their lessons when Matey went in to practice, and were obliged to stay there, the apartment being anything but spacious. Matey, although not a shy child, was at first rather abashed by their serious pale faces as they bent their dark heads over their books and wrote carefully in their blue-lined copy-books. But Mimi and Henri were near her age, and Ziza not very much younger. All four were natural children in different ways, and it was not long before they were on comfortable friendly terms.

The Vinets were being educated at home, and very soon Matey was sharing the attention of the teacher who came to give them lessons, while Professor Gilbert was sharing the expense of paying him. This arrangement pleased the Vinets, and it certainly gave the Gilberts a priceless freedom from having to take care of Matey.

Matey thus became for this year and a half almost a Vinet instead of a Gilbert. The first result was that she worked more than in all the rest of her life put together. Not that they "worked" as Matey was used to seeing people work around a home. This was still in the days when every province was a never-failing reservoir of fabulously cheap domestic service. Poor though the Vinets were, poorer in many ways than the carpenters and plumbers with whose children Matey had played in Logan Bluffs, poor to the point of never having expensive cuts of meat and of wearing large patches on their coarse strong underwear, they were true bourgeois of their period, and never lifted a finger to do housework. A dull obstinate little Breton slave in her slightly grotesque, not very clean, and picturesque costume, marketed, carried coal up and ashes down the stairs, cooked, scrubbed the red-tiled floors of the kitchen and dining-room, made the beds, and swept the floor of the living-room. No matter how tired she might look, none of the family ever dreamed of helping her. Indeed Matey had the impression that most of the time they did not see her. Twice a week her old aunt, grimly carved in weather-beaten oak, came in to do the heavier cleaning. A lean underfed floor-polisher came once a fortnight to skate breathlessly back and forth over the polished wooden floors on a waxed flannel-covered brush tied to his foot. And every Wednesday an old sewing-woman, who was paid two francs and her lunch, mended and darned and patched in a corner of the children's room. The Vinet life was of incessant effort, but almost wholly disembodied. No part of any Vinet body was active save his fingers, in handling pen or piano-keys. One of the many things which astonished Matey in this new life was to find that not one person in the Vinet family had ever washed or wiped a single dish. But for all that the children led, and Matey led with them, a life of taut, driving activity, compared to which Matey's existence till then seemed like a sprawling dawdling vacation. There was, it seemed, vastly more than she had realized to be accomplished before children grew up. No time was to be lost.

Before them, Matey seemed to gather, once they were grown up, there lay not only work and earning their living, but new vivid interests and pleasures that children knew nothing of, compared to which hide-and-seek was as silly as playing with a baby's rattle or rubber dog. These pleasures and interests—music, reading, the theater, study, conversation, art, friends, thinking—could not be enjoyed or even approached by people who had not been rigorously fitted for them. But they seemed to be within the reach of even hard-working impecunious teachers like the Vinets. They were open not to money, only to those who held the right keys. With all haste and effort, one's childhood was scarcely long enough to learn how to handle the keys which opened the doors to the world.

None of this was explicitly stated, indeed never stated at all. But the air was full of it. Casual conversation at the lunch-table between Monsieur and Madame Vinet was a daily humbling reminder of how much there was for children to learn. Sometimes they talked soberly of the weather or the children's lessons or remedies for colds in the head. But often Matey could scarcely follow: they spoke with ardor, with delight, of things she had never heard of—of having the evening before seen Mounet-Sully play King Oedipus; of a discussion at dinner with a guest over a new theory that the classical tradition had continued into Gothic architecture; they disagreed to the point of squabbling over the reading which had been given of some Sonata or other at a concert, or fell into fits of laughter over the ridiculous noises made by the amateur orchestra in which M. Vinet played the flute, when confronted by the unexpected intervals of a new composer called Debussy.

They might have been talking Hebrew for all the understanding Matey had of their words, but she perfectly recognized the expression in their eyes and voices. It was one quite familiar to her, an eager living expression which, she had thought, belonged only to childhood and hide-and-seek.

Henri was the bridge between the grown-ups and the children at the lunch-table. He was far enough along to ask questions about what went on in his parents' world. Their answers to him, some of which were almost intelligible to Matey, were like outstretched hands of strong climbers to those below them on the path, as if they called, "Come along up where the view is better."

Nothing expressed more clearly to Matey this desire to have children grow up than the difficult abstract subjects given them for their compositions. "Discuss the valuable and dangerous results of good humor in everyday life." She told old M. LaPlante volubly that she couldn't possibly write on such a subject. Never in her life had she ever thought about such things. He dismissed the protest drily. "Why not begin now?" he asked her. "You have had other people around you, always, who have either been good-humored or not. You have presumably been sometimes good-humored and sometimes not. *Think* about it. You have as much material as any one."

For the first time Matey turned her eye inward. Her capacity to think stretched its stiffened joints and emerged from its long seclusion. She gazed up at the ceiling and began to ponder certain things she had always seen.

When her composition was handed in, "There!" said M. LaPlante. "You see you could do it as well as anybody. Why not?" When M. Vinet came into the children's room the next time, M. LaPlante handed him the pages in Matey's unformed handwriting. "The little American has done a very interesting *devoir*," he said.

M. Vinet bent his scholarly face and long brown beard over the composition and read it through. "Yes," he said to the teacher, laying it down, "that picture of a good-humored person, trying vainly to hide by pleasantness the discord between others in the group—I recognize it."

He added kindly, putting his thin hand on her head, "Plenty of brains in that little skull. But, my dear child, do put your mind on the rule for the agreement of your past participles!"

It was nice to be approved of, but Matey had found that French approbation seemed to take a good deal of living up to. Like Mme. Vinet's liking her flexible piano hand. What long hours of piano practice that had let her in for! And after her success with one composition, old M. LaPlante gave them for their next subject, "Discuss John Stuart Mill's idea that happiness is best attained not by a direct search for it, but as one result of a life directed to other ends." Matey felt outraged, as if she had just staggered up a steep long slope, and instead of being invited to sit down and rest were being jauntily summoned to climb yet a steeper. But when Henri, looking over Mimi's shoulder at the subject, remarked, "Oh, I *liked* that one when I had it last year," Matey shut her lips over her protest.

She was far behind Henri (who was her own age) and had her lessons with Mimi, although she was two years older and nearly twice as big. Henri helped them more or less in the preparation of their work. She liked Henri; she thought he was nice-looking with his thin face and big nose. She liked, too, the mild subacid of his understatements. When little Ziza, who was very *coquette* about her clothes, paraded around to show off a new dress or a new hat, Henri's habit was to meet with brotherly coolness her burning black eyes, begging him to exclaim that she looked like a princess, and to admit judicially, "*Tu n'es pas ridicule.*"

Matey, who loved the flaming little Ziza best of them all, always rushed in with "How lovely! How wonderful! How *chic!*" But Ziza prized her brother's judgment most, though she glowered at him hard and ran a little pointed red tongue furiously around her lips. They all prized Henri's judgment most.

Mimi was not as strong as the others, her colds lasted longer, radishes upset her digestion, and so did anything flavored with chocolate. She was distinctly a pensive child, easily depressed, the kind of person for whom "things always go wrong." Instead of robustly teasing and mocking her, Henri and Ziza, when Mimi drooped, surrounded her with a pitying tenderness which often made Matey impatient, toughly perfect in physique as she was. Sometimes she privately thought them a little silly.

There were many things about these new playmates which disconcerted her. Sometimes while Mme. Vinet was giving piano lessons in the salon at the other end of the long dark hall, if the little Breton maid was too busy, they took turns watching over the baby Paul, called Polo. Matey was astonished by the adoration shown for him by his brother and sisters. She had always seen older children aggrieved when their playtime was cut short by the care of a baby brother or sister. As time went on, however, her attention being called to Polo's six-months-old antics, she too began to find in them some of the engaging qualities she had always been quite willing to admit in puppies and kittens.

Except for the cooing and incense-burning during Polo's visits to the children's room, it seemed to Matey there was no let-up whatever in the dynamo hum of their work. There were practically no moments of the relaxed delicious "fooling around," doing nothing, which had filled so much of her largely served-out leisure. They passed from their ink-stained pine work-table to the piano and back again. There was hardly more than time enough to prepare and recite the long lessons, to practice the long exercises set them. Whenever they did have a minute to themselves, Henri, who had just begun four-hand music and took it with the ardor of a stamp collector with his first album, would rummage out some arrangement of something or other from the piles of dusty music in the dark little *cabinet de débarras* which was the Vinets' poor city substitute for an attic, and expect Mimi or Matey to sit down at the piano with him and read off the bass or treble. Astounded and stung by the reading facility of her new playmates, Matey flung herself desperately at the pages. Into the attempt to get through somehow, anyhow, a rapid difficult presto, to land at least on the last note of the passage at the same time Henri reached it, she transposed the fierceness of determination she had learned in hide-and-seek, racing to reach the goal before her pursuer. But try as she might, Henri never seemed impressed. He was always kind, but from chance remarks, Matey knew that he saw her not as she pictured herself, repressed, silenced, accomplishing wonders of faithful work; but as a natural unrestrained young animal, untidy, noisy, unfinished—yet not without a certain aboriginal charm.

It was another story outdoors. Mme. Vinet had the firm Parisian belief in the hygienic importance of a daily dip into outdoor air. Every day at three, the baby, Polo, was put in his carriage and the conscientious mother took her children out. Perhaps once a month on fine Sundays they took their lunches in paper packages and spent the whole day in the country out of doors.

Before Matey's arrival the daily outing had been a walk, enlivened by gently rolling hoops or skipping rope beside their mother as she slowly pushed the baby-carriage along. They knew accurately how far they could go in the allotted hour along the *allées* and gravel walks of the Luxembourg gardens. The beauty of the exquisitely tended flower-beds in the different seasons was an important part of their pleasure and very often a subject of their talk. They often stopped, too, to gaze dreamily at the interminable games of croquet being played under the trees by old gentlemen *en retraite,* games which neither began nor ended, but were.

Without any intention of being revolutionary, indeed without thinking at all about it, Matey at once turned this routine upside down. It was the first time she had ever lived in an apartment—they were known only by hearsay in the America of her childhood—and the ordinary restrictions as to quiet, necessary because of neighbors above and below, were suffocating to her. The moment she had found herself out of doors, with real earth under her feet and over her head a sky recognizable as such though so gray, she had burst into play as a fountain flings itself up into the air. Her bacchante delight in romping was as infectious to the sensitively organized Vinet children as a peal of laughter. Ziza, quicksilver Ziza, was after her in a moment, and even Henri, the dignified and precocious, soon followed her away from his mother's side, and with his sisters began to run and shout, to play tag, hide-and-seek, and puss-in-the-corner, to use his great hoop in breathless races with one of the little girls, instead of as an exercise in dexterity to see how slowly he could keep it moving without falling over.

On their Sundays in the country Matey even organized a truncated version of one-old-cat baseball. Mimi, always a little inclined to what Matey learned to call *nonchalance,* often did not feel energetic enough to join in this play, but Ziza was soon not a bad catcher, and a real expert at running bases, although she never could learn to save her breath by refraining from wild shrieks as she ran. As for Henri, the ups and downs of this mild contest provided a quite extravagant excitement to the musicianly little boy brought up with his sisters who had never before played any outdoor boy's game more competitive than spinning tops.

Mme. Vinet was somewhat taken aback by the turbulence into which the little American led her brood, but she and her husband, like most of the members of the Instruction Publique of that period, considered themselves open to new ideas, even startling ones. In addition, Mme. Vinet, like most Frenchwomen, intensely wished to have the best for her children, and even the density of bourgeois traditions did not hide from her the fact that her children's faces were rosier as well as dirtier after an hour of this immoderate Americanized play, and that they were getting through the dark dripping Paris winter with fewer colds and better appetites than usual. She was obliged, of course, to draw the line somewhere. She checked the loudness of their voices, she forbade them to run or skip once they were on the street on the way home; and she firmly enforced the rule about the impropriety of appearing in public with ungloved hands; after all one could not let them act like little guttersnipes.

It was hardly one of Matey's most comfortable years, perpetually tuned up as she was to an incredible standard of serious behavior, good manners, and hard work, perpetually nettled and humiliated to find herself so ignorant of what her playfellows took for granted. But it was a memorable one, bringing into her life permanent new elements—new interests, new ideals—her first encounter with a living religion. Not that the Vinets were devout in the usual sense. On the contrary they joined heartily (as became members of the still new secular system of public education) in the anti-clerical Third Republic reaction from formal faith. They lived and brought their children up conscientiously in a vivid unbelief in all the dogmas and creeds which their own parents had taught them. They spoke (with self-conscious radicalism) of Jesus as one of the great sages of the world, and taught the children to venerate Socrates and Buddha also. But this attitude, while it had more warmth of religious feeling than the quite indifferent, occasional church-going American tolerance to which Matey was accustomed, was not the glowing core of their faith, the basis of their radiant denial of the vanity of all things, which cast its reflected light into Matey's empty little soul.

Sometimes, late in the afternoon, after they had come in from their play, when it was not Mme. Vinet's carefully observed "third Tuesday at home" and when she had no lesson to give, they had a quiet visit all together in the salon. Mme. Vinet was often too tired to struggle for long with the stiff difficult medium of words. It was nearly always from the piano that she talked with her music-loving children.

It is dark by five o'clock of a Paris winter. When they entered the heavily curtained living-room, Mme. Vinet always went to light the two candles on each side of the piano. Their pointed yellow flames were the only brightness in the room, except the red glow from the stove. When she sat down at the piano, neat in her often-mended black dress, the candles shed little light on anything but her pale plain face, as running her fingers over the keys she looked thoughtfully at the children, sitting very still and remembering to keep both feet on the floor.

What she played was a natural part of their day's life, of her daily routine, a musical comment on what some one of them had been doing. Sometimes she ran over what one of the children was practicing, making out of a Bach Invention, which had been mere difficulties for Matey, a thing of clear and intelligible beauty. Sometimes she played what one of her older pupils was struggling with, a Chopin Prelude, a movement from a Beethoven Sonata, and told the children about what the student's difficulty was—here in this phrase—and how it would be ultimately overcome and forgotten by doing this with the fingers—and that with the wrist—but above all by coming to understand the phrase. "Music is having something to say and not saying it in words," as she often told them. Sometimes she played music that helped explain their lessons, as on the day when they first laughed over the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme,* when she played some of the crisp humorous seventeenth century music that had been written to go with the play when the ink from Molière's pen was scarcely dry on the manuscript.

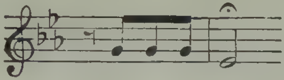
Another day little Ziza encountered the death of Jeanne d'Arc and cried over it so bitterly that Mimi, not usually very imaginative, cried too. Even Matey, in spite of her astonishment that anything in a history lesson should be taken so to heart, had been moved to consider for the first time that Jeanne d'Arc had been a real girl just about Priscilla's age, and that it must hurt like anything to be burned alive. Nobody had tried to stop Ziza's tears, nobody had tried to "cheer her up," but that afternoon, Mme. Vinet had hunted out among her music a little thin album. It held, she told them, music written by Bach just for himself, his thinking aloud. "Come here, Ziza darling. This is for you. You know, composers when they feel sad don't cry as little girls do. They have another way to say what they feel. Here is what Bach felt when he thought about the death of an innocent person who had done nothing but good. He called it 'At Calvary.' " As her mother played, Ziza cried a little more on her shoulder. The other children sat motionless, their eyes wide, their quieted bodies forgotten and left behind.

Because of her great ignorance, Matey was slow in beginning to understand what was being played—even to hear it distinctly and articulately. All she knew was that during these quiet hours, the dimly lighted room became filled with something which softened her little-girl heart till she could hardly bear it.

There was occasionally talk about the music, mostly between Henri and his mother. He often left his chair and leaned over the piano to watch the notes as she played. He was never far from his mother. They had a special way of looking at each other unlike anything Matey had ever seen. At first she paid little attention to what they said because she had literally no idea what they were talking about. But as the winter went on, the music in which she was steeped from morning to night began to crystallize in her mind. By and by she did know what they were talking about and could not remember exactly when her understanding began.

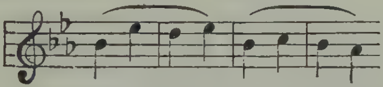
It was interesting talk, for Henri had no idea of being a professional pianist but studied music as one of the elements in a liberal education. Just at that time he was working through Beethoven's Fifth Symphony so slowly that from hearing it over and over, Matey and the Vinet girls came to know parts of it by ear as well as their play songs. As they went about the apartment, they amused themselves by knocking on the doors and walls in the rhythm of the opening measures. One day Professor Vinet called them "the young Eumenides," a joke which was Greek indeed to them till his wife explained first who the Eumenides were and further that some one, perhaps Beethoven himself, had described those opening raps as the knocks of Fate challenging Man to come out to do battle with his destiny. "I tell you this because it is a commonplace with all the commentators," she went on, "but do not fall into the error of thinking that Beethoven wrote program music. He had ideas, but he was a real musician for all that!"

Naturally this did not make the matter clearer for Matey. She had only the vaguest idea of what Fate might be, and no idea at all why Man should go out to fight with it. But, insensibly, as the winter wore on, the innumerable repetitions of the music and the ideas that came with it worked upon stuff in her mind till out of it something quite her own began to emerge. She saw clearly now a poor little Man, cowering in a poor little shelter, on a sloping twilight heath darkening to night, while a gigantic Fate, a dark mantle falling about him like loosened bat's wings, stood before the door.



Matey saw a hairy black arm thrust from the cloak and rap on the door those threatening notes. Would Man come out and fight? Matey wouldn't have blamed him for just bolting the door and staying quietly in his nice little life.

But it would no longer be a nice little life if it were filled with fear—Matey had met fear once and hated it. *Any*thing would be better than to go on being afraid of something. Man thought as she did, apparently, for he always did answer. Matey heard pityingly the quaver in his frightened voice:



Henri was still struggling with the second movement and had gone no further than a few fumbling readings of the scherzo when one late afternoon Mme. Vinet set both parts of the music before her on the piano. "You will certainly do better work on the first parts, Henri," she said, "if you have some notion of what the whole thing is. Perhaps I can pick out enough notes with my ten fingers to give you an idea. Listen."

Matey listened, too, with a real curiosity. As though it were something in a story-book she was soon hanging on the fight that was raging and shouting in the shabby little salon. Raging and shouting—but singing too. That melody which at the beginning so feebly answered the threat of Fate was no longer weak and frightened but bold and strong. Why, she could hear it plain, it snatched Fate's club away and made those knocks part of its own song—hurrah! Goody! Bang, bang, bang! At the last, "Oh, Man *won!*" she cried, bringing her hands together hard in relief.

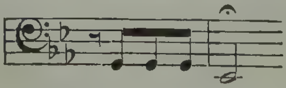
Later on in the year, when Henri and his mother had finally worked their way through all four movements and every note had knocked and sung its way into the heads of the little girls, his parents began to talk about giving him and themselves a great treat by going to hear the symphony played by an orchestra. "Would you like to go too, Matey?" Mme. Vinet asked. "Do you suppose you are old enough to enjoy it?"

The phrasing of the question made Matey answer positively, "Yes, I *would* like to," although she had little idea what a symphony orchestra was. There were but three or four in all the United States at that time.

The cost of the tickets being a considerable item in the Vinet budget, it was decided that Ziza was really too young (she ran that pointed red tongue furiously around her lips at this decision) and that only Mimi would go with M. and Mme. Vinet, Henri, and Matey. When the day came and they set out together it felt like running outdoors to play in Logan Bluffs. They had gone but two or three blocks from the house when, striking his hand on his forehead in despair, M. Vinet remembered he had not brought the tickets. A moment of consternation while they stood around him, suggesting yet another pocket into which he might plunge an agitated hand—and then it was remembered that Mme. Vinet was the one who had the tickets. *"Saperlotte!"* said M. Vinet with a shaky breath. "That gave me a scare."

Arrived at the dingy concert hall, they climbed endless stairs to the cheap seats. Matey did not know the first numbers of the concert and made nothing out of them beyond surprise at the astonishing volume and beauty of the sound which welled up from the stage far below and billowed cloudlike around them in the top gallery.

"Now they're going to begin the Fifth," said Mme. Vinet. She took Henri's hand in hers. They gave each other their special look. Matey had no premonition of what was to happen. She thought she knew the Fifth by this time, as well as she knew the look of her hat and coat, or the feel of her bed at night.



rapped out the deep-voiced menacing strings. Matey's heart turned over with a knock of its own. Why, she hadn't known *this* music at all! It was something else, something else entirely.

What was this faintingly lovely theme now barely audible after the thunder of the beginning? Was it possible, could it be the air she and the other children had hummed and whistled and sung as they had put off and on their wraps, or washed their hands? It *was!* She recognized every note. But every note was new! It floated up past her, transfigured in the voices of the violins.

Turning halfway on the bench, Matey laid her arm along the back and put her face down on it. A fold of M. Vinet's well-worn professor's black coat had fallen over her knees. She took hold of this and held it hard, as though it had been a living hand—such as the one Henri was holding.

She did not move at all till after the end, when people were applauding. Then she turned around and began to clap her hands as the others were doing. Her face was very grave, and had none of its usual rosy glow. She looked pale and quiet, almost like a French child.

"Did you like it?" M. Vinet asked her, wiping the happy tears from his eyes and blowing his nose with a huge handkerchief.

"Oui, Monsieur," said Matey, in a low voice.

Henri and his mother sat silent, hand in hand.

They walked home to save omnibus fare. Professor Vinet left them to give a private lesson. Henri and his mother walked together, Matey and Mimi behind them. The little girls were very quiet. Mimi stepped wide and irregularly to avoid the cracks between the flag-stones as she always did on walks abroad, but absent-mindedly.

Matey was struggling fitfully with a question that fluttered like a cobweb, to and fro in her mind. How could something in her everyday life turn, as the music had, into something from another world—and yet be just what she had known it all along? How could it change to something else no more like what she had known than dry sticks are like fire—and yet be nothing new?

It was a question much too hard for her scattering wits even to keep in mind. Whenever she tried with her unskilled child's fingers to take hold of it firmly, away it blew, off into nothingness, and there was nothing in her thoughts but what was before her eyes. The walk home led them along the *quai* where pet animals are sold. They passed sad little monkeys squatting on straw in show-windows; bright clouds of goldfish in great glass tanks; restless imprisoned love-birds in pairs, fluttering on their perches. Matey's eyes looked at them intently, but from time to time there fluttered in the cage of her brain the question that was too hard for her even to think about for more than an instant.

It had been alone at first, but presently it encountered another perplexity of much longer standing, another question that had always puzzled her, which she had never felt like asking aloud—as church language described Heaven, why in the world would anybody want to go there?

United for an instant the two questions flickered across her mind. At the glimpse of the two together she cried out, "Oh, maybe that's the way Heaven is—just the same but all different!"

"Qu-o-o-i, qu'est-ce que tu dis?" asked Mimi, raising her voice above the din of the street.

"Nothing," said Matey hastily. The Vinets spoke reverently of Jesus, but Matey knew they considered talk of God or Heaven fit only for superstitious *concierges.* Also she would not have known in the least how to answer Mimi. The flash had gone, and she was not sure what she had seen in its light. The idea, whatever it had been, faded as quickly as it came. She could not now even remember how the music sounded. She felt tired and rather cross. *"Rien! Rien du tout,"* she said impatiently to silence Mimi.

The children had forgotten themselves and used the forbidden thick-throated Paris cockney twang. Rousing herself from her mystic's heaven, Mme. Vinet turned back to everyday life. "You mustn't say *'ri-e-en'* and *'qu'est-ce que tu di-i-is?'* like that," she corrected them conscientiously over her shoulder.

"Non, Maman," said Mimi.

"Non, Madame," said Matey.

6

MATEY never went back to Logan Bluffs; never again saw the house that had been for her childhood the center of the universe. Another university offered Professor Gilbert a larger salary. In everybody's eyes this seemed to make their moving as inevitable as the opening of another leaf on a growing tree. So when they returned to America after their fifteen months in France they went to a city called Hamilton several states farther east than Logan Bluffs. As casually (so far as she could see) as shutting down a window, a large number of the ties she had made with the world were cut asunder.

Logan Bluffs was gone, with its houses as much a part of Matey's world till then as the sky or the earth; with its barns and yards different from all other barns and yards as one person is from another; with its school unlike all other schools because it was her school. Not a shimmer from its sunlight, different from all other light because it shone on a world that was partly Matey. Not a murmur from all the turbulent play that had been life. Like a painted scroll the place that had been home to Matey was rolled up out of her life.

With it went something that the Vinet children had, that Matey had taken for granted she had. Henri and Mimi and Ziza and Polo were being brought up in the same rooms in which their father had spent his childhood. They walked before the same buildings and under the same trees which had looked down on their mother as a little girl. On their mother's "third Tuesdays" the same families came to call who had called on her mother and on her husband's mother. The cross *concierge* with his wooden leg who grumblingly handed out the letters and spitefully watched to see who came to call on them had done the same things when their father had been their age. Back of them, dense and stationary as stone, stood the wall of the family, always there for better and worse, unto the third and fourth cousinship. Confident in its reality and permanence, they leaned as heavily as they liked on the world around them.

Matey too had leaned on the world around her. All during the fifteen months abroad while she was being another person it had never occurred to her that she would not presently go back to her old home and turn into her old self. Her thoughts had been adjusted to that return home as the muscles of a man leaning against a wall are adjusted to its solidity. Now, without warning, it was snatched away from her and she felt herself pitching headlong. She made a wild effort to recover her balance; she succeeded in getting her feet under her with enough steadiness for ordinary purposes. But she was in no hurry to lean against another world.

With flat childish letters sent to her old playmates she tried feebly not wholly to lose Logan Bluffs. Of course such attempts soon faded into silence. The fact was that she *had* lost it. Logan Bluffs was no longer her home. But she could not at once consider Hamilton exactly her home either, any more than she could have accepted as a sister a girl she had met for the first time.

This meant that she considered nowhere exactly as home. The brick house in "Faculty Row" on the campus in Hamilton, with well-planned shrubbery around it, was much finer than the wooden prairie rattle-trap on the corner of the block in Logan Bluffs. Yet she felt it safer not to settle down in it but to perch warily on the bough. She found perching there beside her a majority of the children and grown-ups around her. Almost without exception everybody had come from somewhere else, and expected to move again. They kept their tendrils to themselves and their roots packed ready for transportation.

"When we lived in Dayton . . ." they would say; or "The year we were in Minneapolis . . ." Often they were like globe-trotters whose wanderings have outlasted their memories. "There was a big church on the corner of the street where we lived in Detroit . . ." some one would start a story and then, hesitating, "or was that in Minneapolis? Helen, where was that big church that the boys used the wall of to play handball against?" To which Helen, "Oh, that was in Grand Rapids, don't you remember?" Once Matey had heard an absent-minded professor ask his wife, "Where was it that we knew those people . . . he was a professor of geology, I think—whose son fell out of the third story window of his fraternity house and was killed. Don't you remember, he'd had a pet dog that his parents took, after . . ." He was interrupted by amused laughter among his auditors and by his wife's annoyed, "Why, *Rossiter*, that's right here in Hamilton—the Craigs!"

Matey was a good-looking, well-grown girl now, with pleasant gray eyes and long bright brown hair, and had learned enough of the necessary formulae of social existence so that she found no more difficulty than anybody else in gravitating into the group where she naturally belonged. She joined in the life of the high school where she was sent, learned her lessons, went to dances, played the piano occasionally at assembly, did whatever the others did, and in this process took part in a good deal of young fun. From her fourteenth to her seventeenth year, her external life was active and what is called "normal for that age." But the currents of her life were turned in upon themselves at this by much more than the disappearance of the violently playing children of Logan Bluffs—among whom introspection had about as much chance to develop as among cowboys or pirates or lumberjacks. She had known a year of life which had softened her heart as well as her hands. She had begun inexorably to grow up. She did not welcome the new phase. It was even hard for her to admit that it was there. She refused to lengthen her skirts at the age when other girls did, or to put up her hair. At fifteen she was racing about the playground playing hide-and-seek, as wistfully as a man of forty dresses up in a red fez or white apron. But it was her turn now. Like Priscilla's, her eyes were opening for the first conscious look at life. They saw what was nearest them, and, as Priscilla had, took that for life itself.

In a panic she looked about her. Even in a provisional world you must be able to find something to lean against. Of course Priscilla was still there.

But was she? Matey waited and waited for the sister she had known to come back into the lively popular young lady, who after graduating at the University in Hamilton went on living at home and taking a year or so of postgraduate work, "majoring in English" as was the custom of faculty daughters when they did not know exactly what to do with themselves. She was still in the same house with Matey, was always flashing in or out of the front hall with one of her cavaliers, in a hurry to go somewhere or do something. She and Matey shared the same bedroom just as they always had. But somewhere in the years when Matey had not known enough to notice or had been too absorbed in her own life to see, Priscilla had disappeared. Matey still had the nicest kind of big sister, envied by the other girls, kind and serviceable, always ready to help with Latin lessons or hair-ribbons, very clever in the trimming of hats, very good-natured in the matter of hiding minor transgressions of family rules from the family rulers. As long as the moral atmosphere around them was the brisk one suitable for catching a trolley-car, or deciding which color to go with which, Priscilla seemed like herself. But she had thoroughly learned, long before Matey came blundering into a new self, how to surround herself perpetually with matter-of-factness.

For a time, as Matey nursed a bruise or cut from an encounter with an angle of life new to her, or felt her new young heart kindled to flame by a glimpse of beauty, she tried to share it with Priscilla.

"Say, Priscilla, today at church, you know what the rector said about Christ's paying God to stop hating us, by getting himself crucified . . . honest, Priscilla, doesn't that make you *sick!* How can people think such a horrible thing about God!"

Priscilla had disappeared. In her place was a preoccupied young lady who answered vaguely, "Oh, I don't know. I never thought much about that," and who added quickly, "Matey, you know that blue hat of mine? Don't you suppose that would look well with your white swiss?"

"Priscilla, quick, come out and look at the sunset! Look at the way that fierce-looking orange down by the horizon goes up and up and somehow gets itself turned into clear, clear green . . . I should think an angel's eyes would be that color, wouldn't you? How *can* that sort of angry orange get itself changed into such a *quiet* color as that green?"

To nobody else in the world would Matey have said such things. She did not long go on saying them to Priscilla, who told her good-naturedly now, "Well, Matey! Anybody'd think that was the first sunset you'd ever seen!"

To which Matey, if she had known the truth, would have answered that it was.

"Priscilla, did you ever turn off Main Street, toward the river? I did today. Hannah Warner said there was a carpenter over there that we could get cheap to make the scenery for the high-school play. It turned out he lives on the other side of Main, the right side. But I thought it was the left and turned that way and got into the awfullest streets you ever saw. So dirty and smelly . . . I never knew there were such streets in Hamilton! And such horrible old wooden houses jammed up together. And the children, babies too, sitting about on the steps. Honest, Priscilla, you never *saw* such dirty kids. Not just dirty either—sickly-looking, and dumb! Their mouths sort of hanging open. Priscilla, listen, stop reading just a minute. Priscilla, why should there be such poor people? *Babies* can't help themselves! We had ice-cream for dinner tonight. Doesn't it make you feel *bad*, to have nice things to wear and eat and everything . . . Priscilla, don't you think something ought to be *done* about it? *Priscilla!*"

No. call the name as often, as loud as she might, Priscilla never answered. What she said was, "*Matey!* If Father and Mother knew you'd been poking around in such a place they would just go through the roof! I won't say anything about it, this time. But don't you ever do it again, not *ever*. It's not safe. Did you find the carpenter you were looking for? I know one of the University boys, working his way through, who's always looking for odd jobs. He'd do it lots better. I'll talk to him about it and see what he says. I'd be glad to help you kids out."

Priscilla was always glad to help out. Matey's classmates often said she had the most *won*derful big sister in the world. Matey replied in a familiar formula, "How nice of you to say so." Out of these attempts to talk things over with Priscilla emerged a phrase which became a new formula, pronounced by Matey with a bewildered accent, "What was it we were talking about?"

Priscilla always answered, vaguely, "I don't seem to remember *what* it was."

Matey could not for a long time realize that this was final. As she grew less and less sure she was on the right path, she tried harder and harder to throw her arms around Priscilla to see if it was all right, to make sure that Priscilla under her nonchalant airs was really not afraid. Some of the things Matey ran into really did scare her like everything.

"Priscilla, one of the girls in my class . . . you know her, that Pelham girl with the red hair . . . well, she got to talking today. I don't know how we got started on that . . . Well, anyhow, she got to talking about . . . boys . . . and things. She said . . . she said one of the boys kissed her last night, after the show. She said he tried to . . . to . . . Priscilla, she says when a person gets married . . . Priscilla, *is* it all right to . . . What is . . ."

Matey might have struggled through as far toward Priscilla as that, groping her way painfully around the heaped-up shyness, shame, and ignorance that cut her off from plainer speech. But she never advanced further.

"Matey! She must be a *horrid* girl! Don't you have anything more to do with her. Why, I *never* think about such things, never. And you mustn't either. Put it right out of your mind."

This was worse than usual. It almost seemed to Matey that for an instant she had touched the real Priscilla. And found out that she *was* afraid.

Having told Matey to put it right out of her mind, Priscilla chose to consider this done. She neither spoke of "such things" to Matey again, nor ever inquired what might be in Matey's mind as she sat sometimes of an evening, apparently studying her algebra, but quite obviously thinking of something else.

Strangest of all was the way Priscilla acted about Matey's music. Matey had been intensely proud to find that the austere discipline of the Vinet life had made her a pianist far in advance of most of her new associates, even those who had been "taking piano" all their lives. She had thrilled with satisfaction when Father or Mother, smiling confidently, had called on her to take her part in their "evening at home." But—after she had got over the first intoxication of the generous applause—somehow the savor seemed to go out of it. She still played in public when she was asked, banging her way through brilliant selections, the sort of thing people liked to hear, with plenty of easy runs and obvious chord-sequences, but she was devoutly thankful Mme. Vinet was not there to hear her.

Real music came when she was alone late in the afternoon with the busy day behind her. Sometimes she played music she had learned with Mme. Vinet, sometimes new things she had read alone, or something she had studied with her Hamilton teacher, a conscientious musicianly German lady, to whom Matey with her capacity for hard work came as a sending from Heaven. This was the one time when she recaptured something of the feeling of permanence. It was not the music alone but all its associations which brought sometimes the softened fullness of heart which precedes happy tears.

Fullness of heart always seeks an outlet. With whom could Matey share hers? "Priscilla, I've got the nicest Bach Invention you ever heard for my lesson this week. Come on, let me show you how it goes."

"Priscilla, Mrs. Mulhauser has given me the Minuet in Sonata No. 12. It's just *sweet*. Listen for a minute."

At first Priscilla had come in good-naturedly, as she did everything, had stood or sat quietly listening while her little sister played. But very soon she withdrew herself. This time Matey saw her doing it, could not doubt the intention with which Priscilla always remembered something else to be done. Why? *Why?* When Matey fairly cornered her, and asked more plainly than she ever could about anything personal to herself, "What's the matter with you, Priscilla?" the older girl said, almost with a tremor of wildness in her usually smooth cheerful voice, "Oh, Matey, let me alone! I—I don't believe I like music very well. It makes me feel . . . queer . . . some of the things you play." She pulled away. She was gone, pushing shut the door Matey was trying to open.

Francis lived mostly in the fraternity house of the "swell frat" which he had joined in his freshman year at Hamilton. Not that it mattered where he lived. What could she share with Francis? And if Father or Mother came into the twilight room where Matey was playing they always turned the gas up and lighted another jet. Father often said, "Well, Matey, I see you've got to the Romantic School age." Mother generally said, "Matey dear, can't you find anything more cheerful than that to play?"

So, since Priscilla had slipped out of reach, Matey and her music were left alone together.

Some of the pages she played in those years came to seem to her like living things, like persons—only much more sure and unchanging than persons. The home-feeling of permanence was gone, the old joy in games was gone, she was becoming a new person and not a person she altogether liked, and something she had always feared to look at grew plainer and plainer before her eyes. But Beethoven and Schubert, and Bach—Bach most of all—were still there, unchanged, unchangeable.

There was one Bach Prelude in particular, the Sixth, which sounded to her exactly like an answer. An answer that knew how difficult the question was. As she wound her way through it, in and out those unexpected various phrases, as different each from every other as every leaf and branch on a tree is different from all the rest, her mind sometimes lost its way. Her fingers went on as nimbly as ever, but she felt that they were lost in meaningless twirlings which had nothing to do with each other. But when the end drew near she was reminded that all the leaves and all the branches only make one tree.

With the last chord, which summed it all up, Matey sometimes felt as though she had put her arms around a forest tree and shared its steadfast strength.

Compared to Priscilla, Bach was very far away. But he was not afraid.

7

SOON after they settled in Hamilton, Mrs. Gilbert's family noticed that her energy was focusing itself about a new center. She tossed the civilizing influence of dramatics into the limbo of oblivion where the history of art had passed before it. In its place she began to care greatly about details of their entertaining, about the way the table was set. As for the house, everything in it was wrong! With her usual decisiveness she threw herself into re-arranging the two parlors till the rest of the family scarcely knew them, justifying the changes by quoting esthetic principles which they heard for the first time, but of which they now heard a great deal: principles of the balance of spaces, of the value of shadows, of Japanese austerity of line, of the hideousness of Victorian over-ornamentation.

As this new wave of motive energy began to penetrate the deep absorption in their own affairs of her husband and children, their first feeling was of surprise. Then with the instinctive knowledge of long experience, surprise changed to questioning. They cast their eyes inquiringly here and there among the various personages of their world. Who was it this time? When finally over Mrs. Gilbert's shoulder they saw Mrs. Whitlock, they ceased to look inquiring and began to look resigned—but not for long. . . .

Mrs. Whitlock was the wife of the professor of—what was he professor of? Nobody could remember. The important thing about her was not her husband nor the subject he taught, but the fact that some time after her marriage she had, quite unexpectedly, inherited money, a good deal of money. This set her apart from most people around her. In addition to her independent income, she carried a lorgnon, had the aristocratic Southern-sounding odd first name of Meade, drove about in a closed carriage with a coachman in livery (the only one in Hamilton), and had the prestige, extremely rare in those early Whistlerian days, of having traveled in Japan—"of course" (as any one who mentioned the fact hastened to explain) "*not* as a missionary."

Altogether she was too vivid a personality to be ignored, and too forceful to be diminished by taking toward her a pose of resigned amusement. Back in Millerton and Logan Bluffs Professor Gilbert had never seemed to mind in the least Professors Mathewson and Marlin, but his bristles soon began to rise visibly over every contact with Mrs. Whitlock with her thin swarthy smoothed-up middle-aged face, her daring chatter, her quizzical look of indulgent toleration for the crude life about her. And the deeper his detestation grew, the more his wife seemed to delight in her new friend, clinging to her, passing her arm around her as they walked out of the room, calling her up on the telephone for long talks, even when they had been together hours of that very day.

Mrs. Whitlock, with plenty of money, no children, and a negligible husband, was free to drop in at the Gilberts' whenever the whim prompted. As time went on she often stayed to luncheon. Those inflexible noon-hours at the table, barren of a single plausible excuse for escape before the end of dessert, intensified the family attitude to the point of drama. Daily Matey watched Father come in, saw him look black at finding Mrs. Whitlock there again, reluctantly rise to the family tradition, and drag out his company manners. Daily she heard Mrs. Whitlock sticking little pins of ironic comment into everything he said, into all his pet admirations, into the phrases which he had always counted as sure-fire. And all the time she was loudly protesting that she found him "*per*fectly *fas*cinating!"

This bitter little comedy, Matey soon discovered, was another round in the never-ending struggle as to who should come out on top which had always been the background of their family life. No matter what the setting, this was always the only question that mattered. And now Mother had a new ally.

Up to that time Father had come out on top much more often than Mother because he was—Matey knew this very well—much stronger and cleverer than Mother. And ever so much quicker. He could see her, long in advance, getting ready to make one of her trys to get her share of importance, and when the moment came, he had all ready exactly the practiced blighting word and accent to reduce her kind of importance to nothing at all. Mother had been very successful in the Dramatic Club at Logan Bluffs, had been Professor Marlin's star actress for several years. Even so early in her childhood, Matey had winced with pity to see her mother vainly trying to use this hard-won success to force Father's recognition. Father had managed that by staying out. Professor Marlin could never drag *him* into taking a part! This was how Father always managed. At first Matey had naïvely imagined that Father was so clever he could use any situation to show his superiority. But as she grew older she saw that his method was simply to avoid situations where he couldn't.

Even after one of the big successes, like the outdoor production of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, it had been enough for him to give that little curl to the ends of his mustache which he could make as he needed, jaunty or thoughtful or scornful, and begin to talk eloquently about the Shakespearian actresses he had seen, Mary Anderson, or Modjeska, or Ellen Terry. Without a word of direct comparison he created a twilight which dimmed the brightness of Mother's success. To the result of those weeks and weeks of rehearsals and costume-making he seemed to ask, "Is this all?" Mother might read as much as she pleased the friendly enthusiastic reviews in the local newspapers. That twilight of Father's creating was on her face as she read.

It was no twilight that Mrs. Whitlock created on Father's face. It was a thunder-cloud. She had no mustache to curl as she made blighting remarks, but she managed very well without. And practiced as he was in reducing to insignificance whatever he did not choose to recognize, he could not lessen her prestige by an atom, based as it was upon the unshakable solidity of money. He went through all his usual skillful slighting maneuvers. Often he seemed to be succeeding. But it did not last. Her discreetly gleaming carriage with its liveried driver had but to roll up to the door, and she was back on the pedestal. She *was* important. And Mother was her intimate friend.

Francis took it as he took most things, as a huge joke. "Gosh, how they scrap!" he remarked carelessly after one of his infrequent lunches at home. "Just the same, Dad's losing his sense of proportion. You don't see me getting peevish because a lady draped in Government Bonds tells me I'm fascinating. She did, you know! Gave me a lift in her gold-plated chariot up to the Main Building yesterday. You bet I didn't hide in the corner and sulk. I let myself be seen. Next time I'm going to kiss her hand. I'll bet she'd think that was too adorably 'foreign!'" He rehearsed the gesture, bending low over an imaginary hand with the graceful half-mocking ease which he had brought back from France in place of any information about the spelling of subjunctives. "I bet she falls for it. I bet those highbrow frills are only trimmings. What saith the Bard: 'The corporal's lady and Judy O'Grady . . .'"

Priscilla went on looking fixedly the other way. "I can't make Mother out," Matey told her. "She doesn't seem to *like* Mrs. Whitlock. What makes her act so? She *can't* like her!"

Priscilla answered negligently, "Oh, Mrs. Whitlock's not so bad, I guess." But she cut short Matey's attempt to go on. "Well, don't think about her, kid, if you don't like her." Matey noticed that whenever her sister was cornered by Mrs. Whitlock, she raised to an even higher degree of hovering uncertainty her habitual air of expecting the telephone to ring at any moment.

This time Mother was on top. For once a situation where Mother showed to advantage had dropped right around Father so that he couldn't keep out of it, as he had kept out of dramatics. When he used the wrong fork in the suddenly appearing array of silver beside his plate, no turning of his mustache ends, no sneers about absurd formality, could in the present atmosphere of the house turn that mistake into a superiority. One blow to his prestige followed another. He sat morosely silent when the talk was turned to Japanese prints—or if they dragged him in, said brusquely that he had no time for such kickshaws. But he couldn't pass it off that way. They all remembered (and he knew they remembered) the fun he always poked at one-sided half-civilized pedants. His wife's manner silently reminded him of those biologists and chemists whom he had so enjoyed enticing into showing their ignorance of Molière.

When he stayed obstinately silent, they talked across him, about how petty and cluttered French civilization was, compared to the conscious artistry-in-life of the East. Once, helping herself to an olive, Mrs. Whitlock referred casually to Flaubert's *Salammbô* (the darling subject of Father's best senior lecture) as "that side-whiskered, middle-class, lambrequined idea of antiquity." Matey saw an expression of greedy exultation on her mother's face, and on her father's a dangerous look of anger. A foreboding of disaster turned the food in her mouth to wormwood. Priscilla pretended to see the postman at the door, and slipped away. Dessert was brought in, the conversation shifted, Francis laughed his careless laugh, ostensibly at some later remark, and Matey's untried new heart, just emerging into adult life, drew back quivering, and looked wistfully at the cocoon of childishness which had been its refuge.

Father was losing his old craftiness at staying out when he wasn't sure he was right. He knew, of course, that "the American admiration for Bouguereau was one more proof" (he collected such proofs with enthusiasm) "of this country's esthetic impotence." Matey had heard him say that lots of times. But apparently he had missed hearing that Meissonier had stopped being a great artist, and one noon at lunch, the painter's name being mentioned, he brought out a well-turned phrase of admiration, which Matey had often heard him use before. Mrs. Whitlock smiled and began to quote the deliciously witty spiteful remarks of a French art critic who despised him.

She had gone too far. Matey saw Father lay down his fork with a formidable deliberation, and waiting before launching his counter-attack till she should have finished her sentence, face her menacingly. Matey sprang up, terrified, murmured something about needing to be back early at the high school, and leaving her food untouched, ran out of the house, hatless.

It was a pleasant day in spring. In the soft moist air, the grass was greening, the tulips and crocuses blithely unrolling their many-colored petals. Matey saw nothing but the hate and triumph and resentment and anger in the three faces she had left, glaring through the urbane glaze of "conversation." She twisted her shoulders nervously and moved her head from side to side, trying to bring something else to mind.

Some one hailed her by name. A high school comrade, Dick Ransome, the registrar's son, came running out of a house on Faculty Row. "Hold on, Matey. I'm going your way."

He had walked with her several times lately. Matey rather liked him and very much liked the attention he paid her. But today as he fell into step beside her and began talking about baseball prospects, he was struck by her unresponsive silence. He looked at her and saw that her teeth were set on her lower lip as if to keep it from trembling. "What's eating you, Matey?" he asked with real concern. "You look as if you'd lost your last friend."

After one sidelong look into his honest face Matey's lip trembled more than ever. She was sick with longing to accept his sympathy, with longing to escape from the loneliness of her dread and misery. But what could she say? "My father and Mrs. Whitlock are having a discussion about whether Meissonier is a great painter." Her wretchedness was not even tragic. The only part of it that could be put into words was ludicrous. To make him understand she would need to tell him things she had never acknowledged to herself, things which, as she watched her parents, lay at the bottom of her mind like a geologic stratum dropped down, grain by grain, through all her memories of family life. No, she never could make him understand—or anybody else.

When the friendly boy beside her said again, "What *is* the matter, Matey?" she cut him short with a brusque "Oh, nothing."

What else could she say?

He understood very well that he was being told it was none of his business, and with an offended look fell silent. Matey tried now with an unpracticed young clumsiness to make talk, herself. But the boy had his own sensitiveness. He answered her questions about baseball glumly, taking the manner of a boy to whom a girl is making advances. Matey added a nettled resentment to the rest of her distress, and fell silent herself.

Footsteps pattered behind them, and a well-built fox-terrier appeared trotting by Matey's side. They both knew that he was the dog who had belonged to Professor Craig's only son. Since his young master's tragic death, everybody had seen him sitting sadly on the empty porch of the Craig house, turning his pointed face listlessly here and there, or trotting soberly about the campus, his nose to the ground. Matey had seen him a thousand times. He trotted close to her side now, occasionally brushing against her. It occurred to her that he must have rather a forlorn time of it, all alone with a couple of elderly people.

"What's his name?" she asked.

"Sumner," said the boy.

"What a funny name for a dog," said Matey, looking down on the top of his bony triangular head and powerfully muscled shoulders.

"Seems as though I'd heard there was some kind of joke about it—the reason why he got named that, I mean," said the boy. "You know he used to belong to the Craig boy, who fell—"

"Yes, yes, I know," said Matey, hastily.

She looked down at the little dog again and wondered if he had been in the fraternity house that night when his young master's skylarking had ended so. . . .

"Well, so long," said the boy beside her, breaking into a lope to join a group of tall lads tossing a baseball around the playground.

They were now before the high school building. Matey stopped. The dog stood before her. Matey stooped down to him and put her hand on his head. He lifted his eyes to hers, brown eyes, very clear, very deep. The two exchanged a long look.

"Well, good-by, Sumner," she said softly, stroking his head before she left him to enter the school.

But it was not good-by. He was waiting for her in front of the high school building when she came out quite late at five o'clock, and he trotted seriously beside her all the way home.

When they reached the pleasant, dignified, shrubbery-framed house on Faculty Row where Matey lived, she hesitated. She was in no hurry to go back inside of that house. Indeed she wished that she need never enter it again. She sat down on the bottom step and drew a long breath. The dog came up at once and sat down close to her. She put her arm around his small lean warm body.

There was a beautiful sunset that night. This one she saw with her arm around Sumner, his head pressed against her shoulder. She sat there a long time, sunk deep in color, her eyes reflecting the unearthly magnificence in the sky. When she finally stood up to go into the house, she felt tired and let down, her feet hard to lift. But the close-fibered misery which had been like an evil growth inside her was dissolved. "Well, good-by, Sumner," she said again, stroking his head. He looked up again into her eyes, a long searching gaze. "Well, good-by," she said, and opening the front door, let herself into her home.

But it was not good-by. The dog was waiting for her the next morning on the bottom step of the porch. "Oh, *Sum*ner!" she cried. At this he faintly wagged the short stump of his tail. It was as if he had spoken to her. And had said the right thing. She bent to stroke him and this time he arched up his head under her caress with a friendly welcoming gesture. "Well, *Sum*ner!" she said. She did not know how to talk to a dog. The Gilbert children had never had pet animals.

But he seemed to be satisfied with what she said and trotted beside her all the way to school. "How green the grass is getting all of a sudden, since yesterday!" Matey thought to herself. "And the crocuses out! I don't believe they were above the ground yesterday." For an instant she stood again beside the newly arrived tulips in the old garden at Rustdorf. She understood Aunt Connie's cry more and more. Yes, it was incredible in such a mess as life, that a person could still feel so relatively cheerful as she did this morning.

"Want to have a run, Sumner?" she asked, running a few steps herself. He bounded forward with a bark. It was the first time she had heard his voice.

By the end of the fortnight he was hers.

When she asked Mother if she could keep him, Mother had first made her usual effort to take her attention from what was in her own mind and put it on what Matey was talking about. Then she said readily, kindly, "Why, of course, dear!" She added, "You could have had a dog any time, Matey, if you had said you'd wanted one."

Matey's playmates often commented enviously on the fact that her parents gave her everything she wanted.

When she timidly approached the Craigs she found they knew all about it. "Yes, I noticed Sumner had taken to you," said Mrs. Craig. She patted his head and looked down at him. "It's better so," she said. "He's been lonesome with us." She called toward her husband's study, "It'll be all right to let Professor Gilbert's daughter keep Sumner, won't it, Father?" He came to the door to look at Matey. The dog was standing close beside her.

"You'll be good to him," said Professor Craig.

He stated it as a fact, but Matey answered as if it had been a question.

"Yes, I'll be good to him," she said in a low voice.

8

THE fourth year of their stay in Hamilton, when she was a senior in the high school, Matey was almost like an only child in the house. Francis, with graduation day looming ahead, was making the most of what was left of college life; and Priscilla, now twenty-three, having taken her M.A. in English and flightily refusing to marry another eligible young professor, went off to teach in a high school in Detroit. She secured this position for herself, preferring it to the place in the Hamilton high school which her father was sure he could obtain for her. He was always an influential figure in any community where they lived.

One night, shortly before Priscilla went away, she was in the bedroom packing and deciding what to take with her for the new venture. Matey sat at the study table, doing her geometry lesson for the next day. Priscilla came and went energetically between open bureau drawers and open trunk. The house was quite still. Through the open door the girls heard the telephone bell ringing downstairs. As though the drawling self-conscious voice had sounded in the room, they both knew that Mrs. Whitlock was calling. Their father evidently stepped quickly from his study on the ground floor to the telephone. They could not hear what he said, but they caught perfectly the personal, intimate man-to-woman murmur in which he now spoke for a moment or two. Then, changing to a matter-of-fact tone, he called upstairs to his wife. "Mrs. Whitlock on the phone, Jessica." His steps, brisk and rhythmic as though set to a lively inner tune, went back into his study.

In her room, next to theirs, the girls heard their mother stir, come out on the landing, and without answering her husband, go laggingly down the stairs. There was a pause as though she stood for a time motionless before the instrument. Then her voice, bright, hard, animated, "Oh, *Meade* dearest, how *are* you?"

Priscilla got up from her knees beside the trunk, and went quickly to shut the door. The hard high voice was dimmed to a murmur. Priscilla looked at her little sister's shadowed face. It was bent over the geometrical figures on the pages of her text-book. But the eyes were tightly shut. Priscilla said, "Say, kid, I wish I could take you with me."

She was frightened—and so was Matey—by the wildness of Matey's answering cry as she sprang up and ran to her sister. "Oh, Priscilla, if you only *could!*"

Even as she threw her arms around her sister, Matey knew again that she could not escape. Priscilla knew it too. Matey knew by the nervous way Priscilla was patting her on the back that Priscilla had startled herself as much as her sister by those impulsive words, was now desperately anxious to set up again her usual protecting screen of not recognizing what was before her.

"Hush, hush, Matey! don't! don't!" she said. "You've been studying too late. I've kept you up with my packing. I'll stop. You must go to bed right off."

But she could not at once relax the loving pitying pressure of her arms, nor take her cheek away from her sister's tear-wet face. Nor could she instantly check the impetus of the feeling which had spoken those revealing words. It drove her now, frightened though she was, to go further, to half-admit that there was something behind the screen. "Listen, Matey, listen," she said brokenly in her sister's ear, "the only thing that helps is to keep busy . . . keep going. You remember that, Matey, when I'm gone . . . *keep busy!*" It was all she had salvaged for herself out of her defeat. She offered it tremblingly as the only help she could give—and retreated in a panic. Her broken spirit feared emotion of any kind. She would not allow Matey to go on crying till she had washed her heart clean but told her again that she was tired, was sleepy, that she needed to go to bed. She began to undo the buttons and hooks of her dress and said with a flat attempt at humorous bluffness, "Gracious, Matey, take a brace! What's the matter with you, kid? Take a brace. Take two braces!" She dipped a towel in cold water and made Matey rub it hard on her flushed face glazed with tears. She made her drink a glass of cold water, and going to the open window, take several deep breaths. She brought out with energy a practiced technique of how to drive emotion under cover, and continued to apply her recipes till she had Matey in her nightgown tucked up in bed, rather pale but composed and quiet. "There, that's better, kiddo," she said in a bright chattering tone, "you look more like a man and a fellow citizen."

Matey turned her head away and closed her eyes. She had nothing in her mind now but a weary wish that Priscilla would stop talking and turn out the light.

That year was something that Matey tried in vain to push down into the black hole in her mind where she kept the unbearable things out of sight. But there was too much of it. It rose up and up around her and over her head till there was no difference between her daily life and the black hole.

It was dreadful when she and Father and Mother had to sit through dinner by themselves, the air in the room stifling with what they ignored—the preposterous nightmare of Mother's position, where to preserve even the appearance of dignity she must pretend brightly to be perfectly satisfied. It was not easy to do one's share in the talk during such meals, to report with an appearance of animation what had been happening in the high school classes, to listen to Mother's brittle accounts of callers, to hear Father telling which students were chosen for Phi Beta Kappa this year or what had been on the table in Faculty meeting that afternoon, or say, "Your friend Mrs. Whitlock came into the office today for a consultation about that paper on Flaubert she is writing in my seminar. You were right about her, Jessica, and I was wrong. She really is a very intelligent and charming woman."

When he said this, did Mother answer? Did she keep silent? It made no difference. Her defeat had once more been marked. Matey saw waves of falseness shimmering in the air like heat, renewed by every word or every silence.

It was worse when Mrs. Whitlock was there, and Francis. Francis found nothing but comedy in Mrs. Whitlock's swallowing Father's hook, in her dropping her hard knowingness for yielding femininity, in her incense-perfumed questions to her new mentor about debatable points of French literature, in their intimate exclusive atmosphere of apostle and disciple of culture which turned the tables on Mother with a delicate absurd poisoned irony. Francis had always thought Mrs. Whitlock a fool (he thought most people fools) and no worse a one now that she so naïvely surrendered to his father's transparent tactics.

He followed those tactics himself, flattering her grossly and hilariously till Matey was ashamed to meet his sparkling eyes. Whose eyes could she meet? The seventeen-year-old girl often looked from her father, his aquiline face more striking as the hair and mustache whitened, to her dark vivid mother with her air of gallant energy (poor Mother, what good had it ever done her—those foolish Japanese prints on the wall behind her!) and thought to herself, "If they would only let me eat my meals with Sumner!"

It was worst of all when there was an evening party, when they must all conspire to fill the house to the brim with a flowing certainty that everything was perfectly all right. How they worked at that! How they played up to Father's unvarying tactics about travel-talk! They leaned forward as though it were the first time they had ever heard him do it, listening intently, while, early in the meal, he skipped lightly about over European travel routes, dismissing with a neutral word everything with which any guest claimed familiarity, until by elimination he found some town or *château* or gallery that was his alone. They helped make the necessary silence for his ensuing monologue of praise of Segovia or Loches or Albi. Even when once again he spoke of Siena as the "heart of medieval Italy" none of them raised an eyebrow. When he described his passionate enjoyment of Holland and the

Hals, Mother said not a word about the passionate discomfort of being with him in a foreign country where he did not speak the language. They collaborated with each other in a secret pact to keep the surface smooth, all that lay between them drawing them for the moment into as united a front as devoted affection could have created.

"We always have such *gay* times at your dinner-parties, Mrs. Gilbert," her guests often remarked.

"Yes, isn't she an inspired hostess!" Mrs. Whitlock would reply, as she passed her arm fondly around her friend's waist.

Faculty people wondered to see the two women still almost inseparable. Mrs. Whitlock's affinities had always worn out so quickly. She now seemed to outsiders like an old friend of the Gilbert family.

Yes, after a heart-sick evening of watching those faces and presenting the right one herself, Matey had forgotten that there could exist anywhere in the world such honest eyes as those of Sumner when he jumped down from the foot of her bed and came trotting to meet her. He was a quiet little dog, rather offish with everybody but his mistress. Even with her, although he was often playful, he was not exuberant, never exploded into barks and tail-wagging and contortions of joy. Matey always respected him greatly as well as loving him more than she could begin to say—it was really almost terribly that she loved him that year.

"Oh, Sumner *darling!*" she often whispered foolishly, astonished, really astonished, that he could go on being himself so simply, so invincibly. The hard warm solidity of his living body seemed the first real thing she had touched for hours. She had an adult's limiting knowledge that he could not understand words, and did not talk to him as perhaps she would if she had owned him from his puppyhood. But it did not matter. She sat soberly, holding him on her lap, looking deep into his eyes. "A dog's eyes are so *true,*" she told herself as earnestly as though she were the first person to use the phrase.

Sumner lay warm at her feet as she studied. He was part of the loosening of her inner tension as her mind began to reflect the calm certainties of mathematics, or the cunningly devised interlacings of Latin sentences. He helped when she remembered Mother's artificial voice, answering Father's veiled taunt with "Yes, isn't Meade *delightful!*" When thick around her rose the recollection of Father's acrid admiration of his own easy masculine rout of the two women's offensive, Matey did not, as Priscilla had, vainly try to go on fixing her attention on Latin or geometry fading from the page, nor did she end by laying a defeated head down on her arms. She pushed her chair away from the study table and called "Sumner! Here, boy!" Sumner was alive. His flesh and blood and bone and love did not fade away before unwanted thoughts.

He did something else for her. Always before she went to bed she took him for a little turn out of doors. Priscilla had never thought of leaving the house at night, but had gone to bed straight from the living-room, all its tones and accents echoing in her ears. But for the owner of a dog, it was a natural part of the routine of his care. Matey and her dog never went far; around the yard perhaps, down to the corner of the street and back. Never out of sight of the house. It was far enough. It was off into another dimension Matey stepped when, preceded by Sumner's scurrying little feet, his toe-nails clicking briskly on the porch floor, she walked out of her home into keen starry winter nights, or into black velvet summer softness. Sometimes she stood motionless, with upraised face, drawing long deep breaths, filling her lungs with new air. Sometimes she stretched her arms wide in the gesture of one suddenly freed from bonds. Her home and all that was in it sank down to nothingness under the steady eyes of the stars.

It vanished quickly, this sense of escape. It was all gone by next morning when she took breakfast with Father and Mother, when to her ear all they said echoed with the overtones of what they did not say; when at a word from one of them in a natural comfortable voice, her spirits rose flutteringly, in the hope that this was going to be a "good day," or at an ironic or resentful tone her heart sickened in the fear of a bad one to be lived through. It did not last long, what she found under the open sky at night, but enough of it clung to her garments, along with the fresh night air unscented with house-life, so that she was still breathing it when she fell asleep. She sometimes remembered Priscilla's reading till all hours, and admitted to herself that she was better off than Priscilla had been.

She did not always think so. In Priscilla's time there had been respites. Matey remembered them well. Long respites day after day, when a warmth of the heart seemed to shine transformingly into their much-admired home; times when she and Priscilla had thought (but never said), "Why, Father and Mother are *all right!*" Those had been sweet days. At such times they could not walk, they must jump and run. What passionate gratitude the little girls had felt for their splendid brilliant father, their wonderful vital mother.

The respites never lasted. The little girls always knew they would not. Priscilla began to look anxious again. The house gradually became filled with the old corrosion of competition; everything lost its own value, and became nothing but a tool more or less useful in the old struggle.

Now there seemed to be no respites at all that could be counted on. Perhaps it was worse because that year Matey was like an only child. Francis came and went between his fraternity house and his home, according to a purposeful rhythm of his own, based on what he could get out of home, with a finished technique of avoiding bother. Matey remembered from the old days his amused questions to Priscilla, "Well, how's the old soul this evening? Still finding life-is-real life-is-earnest, or can it unbend to a game of backgammon?" Her time-clock rang its alarm all that year, but never more clearly than when she saw her handsome brother come bounding up the steps of the porch. His pleasant "Hello, Matey, old girl, how's everything?" turned the key of his sister's heart. But she knew better than to open the door. She knew that nothing would come in save a derisive "Gee whiz, kid, what is it to *you?* Why shed tears over a comic strip?" Francis needed no instruction in seeing the humorous side of life.

The warning bell of Matey's time-clock kept her fiercely determined to act all through that year exactly like any other seventeen-year-old high school senior. Her father and mother, always meaning to do their duty, saw to it that she had pretty clothes and occasional parties at home. Matey knew very accurately that although they were disappointed because she had so little of Francis's dash and brilliance, they were relieved that she was not, in her father's phrase, "throwing any adolescent fits"; and occasionally they were mildly proud of her, when she was wearing a specially becoming dress or had some marked success in her music or studies.

To this approval of her surface life, she was obliged, of course, by the conventions in which she had grown up, to make a suitable surface response. By this time she had grown fairly skillful in the invention and use of formulae and had a set ready for most occasions, even a set to cope with Mrs. Whitlock's old-friend-of-the-family compliments. But what she said was so different from what she was feeling that sometimes as the formulae reeled smoothly from her tongue, she lost her sense of reality. The words they were all pronouncing were drowned out by the silent clash of their personalities. Sometimes she turned cold, thinking that she had actually cried aloud the words so often in her mind, "Father! Don't! *Don't!*" But since he never turned on her with his invincible ironic look to ask the question she would not have dared to answer, "Don't what? What in the world do you think you are talking about?" she knew that that cry was never audible.

That winter a débutante in the little city's pretentious "society set" shot herself dead. The circumstances of her life were well known, and there was no possibility of any of the usual motives. Her friends repeated that she had been in the best of spirits all that season. Her bright animation had been specially commented on. "She always had everything she asked for," her stricken parents moaned, as they often do in such cases. It was one of those baffling, causeless suicides among perfectly well-cared-for young people in perfectly lovely homes which recur with more or less regularity in all circles.

This tragedy and the interpretation which she put on it brought a new poison to Matey also in the business of being brightly animated. For the first time she began to find a mawkish picturesqueness in her secret trouble. A martyr-Matey began to evolve. She looked into Sumner's honest eyes and saw reflected back only her own face, theatrically wistful. At the piano her fingers turned to plaintive adagios. She began regularly to go to church, finding in the blended choir and organ, in the sonorous King James English of the prayers, only what she was looking for, an esthetic stimulus to self-pity. Alien to her character as it was, sentimentality came to her with the relief of a habit-forming drug. She liked it! The year seemed to be marking a turning-point in the formation of her character when chance, which had brought the poison, brought the antidote.

One evening she went to a minstrel-show in the auditorium of her high school. She had turned down Dick Ransome's bid to escort her, so that she might have the glory of going with the dressy president of her class. Soon with stifled yawns she was regretting her snobbishness. The young dude was both dull and pretentious. He insisted on explaining everything. When the half-circle of black faces and grotesquely reddened lips formed itself on the stage, he whispered to her, "The fat guy in the middle, he runs the show, sort of. He asks them all some question that they make a funny answer to, or dance, or something comic."

But the cadaverous lantern-jawed end man first called on seemed to have no intention of being funny. When asked, "Well, Brudder Johnson, what has you been doin' today?" he launched out earnestly into a complicated story of buying his railroad ticket from the conductor on the train who could not make change and who asked near-by passengers to help him. They had responded, it seemed, with nickels and dimes and quarters, exchanged and interchanged between themselves and the conductor and the narrator of the story, till Matey's head whirled. Presently he stopped talking. Apparently he had come to the end of his tale. The middle-man looked as bewildered as the audience felt, and inquired gropingly, "But, Brudder Johnson, maybe I dun los' my mind . . . I didn't seem to get no point to dat story."

"Point!" boomed Brother Johnson's solemn bass in outraged protest. "Point! Cyan't you add? Cyan't you subtrac'? Cyan't yo' see dey done me out o' fo'ty cents with dey foolishness? *Dat's* de point! My Gawd, man! What mo' point does yo' want?"

The high school audience, come there to laugh, tittered politely. Matey laughed too, but she did not think minstrel shows were so funny after all.

The interlocutor turned to another brother. This one responded with a story about two Irishmen quarreling, the quite expected end of which sent the audience into the expected peal of laughter.

As this died down a little, there came tolling through it in a sepulchral bass voice, "Dat may be all right, Brudder Jones, dat may be all right. But dat don't gimme back my fo'ty cents, do it?" His sorrowful eyes fixed the story-teller reproachfully as if to recall him from trivialities to eternal verity.

Brother Carter broke out into song, a banjo-accompanied piece of jollity, with a rattle of nonsense syllables at the end. Matey, as she applauded, glanced along the wide-opened hilarious red mouths of his fellows to the end man who had first spoken. He sat in profound dejection, the whites of his eyes gleaming under his wrinkled brows, like a disillusioned old dog. At the end of the encore his magnificently mournful lament broke again through the applause and laughter. "What *eveh* does Brudder Carter tink dat's got to do wid my fo'ty cents?" he inquired of the world with the sincerest hurt bewilderment.

After an instant's surprise, the laughter broke out again as the simple-hearted young audience began dimly to take in the point.

After that he became the success of the evening. The very look on his black face as, first expectantly and then with fading hope, he listened to one funny story after another, doubled the fun. The intolerable continuation of his one comment on life, his one measure for all that happened, grew more comic to them with every repetition. He did not even need to say it aloud. If he but gazed in silent grief at a quick-footed rattling hoe-down, the boys and girls burst into wild laughter.

Matey, without in the least understanding why, was almost helpless with mirth. She said over and over, wiping her eyes, "He's the funniest thing I *ever* SAW! If he says that again I shall just go up in smoke!" And her shouts were not louder than those of the other adolescents around her, screaming hysterically as every stroke of the satire went home.

For days afterward, for all the rest of the school year, the lost forty cents echoed their warning gayly up and down the school corridors. For much longer than that, their light accurate admonition echoed in Matey's memory.

At the end of that year, one hot June morning, Matey was deep in a letter to Ziza. Alone among her cast-off homes, the Vinet *ménage* remained more than a shadowy memory. Matey and Ziza kept up a continual though intermittent correspondence. They wrote each other confidences they hid from their own families. Matey had just finished describing her graduation day at the high school and was trying to think of some blightingly witty phrase to express Francis' complacent progress through the social events of Commencement Week toward the A.B. degree which (by the skin of his teeth) he was now sure of getting next Tuesday, when the front door opened and Father came in. He walked past her into his study where Mother was doing the May accounts, but he called back to Matey, "This is something you ought to hear too, daughter. A letter from the President of the University of Corinth, in New York. Professor Brieux, their

Romance language head, is obliged suddenly to return to France, on account of family affairs. The position is offered to me."

Matey's trembling fingers screwed the top on her fountain pen.

Father went on, "I'm rather inclined to accept, Jessica, if you're agreed. The salary is no higher, it's true. But there will certainly be more graduate students than here—my seminar has been a farce for the last year or so. Not a soul with a grain of wit in it!" The scornful reference to Mrs. Whitlock rolled in the air like thunder.

Why, this was one of life's crucial moments. Matey tried to realize that she was not dreaming.

"What do you think, Jessica? Matey, how does that strike you?" He asked the question of his daughter's back, bent over her scattered papers.

If Matey had told him how it struck her, she would have shouted aloud. She knew her father's question had been a rhetorical one and attempted no answer.

After a pause her mother, speaking a little stiffly but steadily, answered, "Why yes, I'd like it, Morris. Francis will be at the Law School next September. And Matey will just be starting her college life. It seems a suitable time to make a change. Priscilla would be no farther away."

"Very well, that's settled," said Father cheerfully, with relief in his voice. Matey had known all along that he would be as glad as anybody to get rid of Mrs. Whitlock. But she had never been able to imagine any way to manage this. Professor Gilbert got up from his chair, stood for a moment, seemed to consider that everything had been said, and went out, with a light conquering tread, facing new worlds.

What, oh, what would Mother say now? With what words would she greet this opening of prison doors? Would she burst into joyful tears as Matey felt like doing?

What her mother said was, "Did you remember, Matey dear, to get those long shoe-laces for my high shoes when you were downtown?"

Matey understood that she was to make no comment on the news. "Yes, Mother," she said. "I'll get them now. They are in my bag."

When she came back with them her mother was still sitting in the same chair. She did not look in the least as Matey felt, madly, wildly excited. She looked extraordinarily tired as though she had not the energy to step through those opened doors. She raised her hand with an effort, to take the little package offered by her daughter.

"Thank you, dear," she said in a low tone, letting her hand with the package fall heavily to the desk.

"Oh, that's all right, glad to do it," said Matey, filled with forebodings. What could this mean? She knew one thing at least, it meant that her mother could not endure an instant more of any one's presence.

"I think I'll go out for a breath of fresh air," she said, turning away. On the porch she stood, her hands pressed tightly together, all her body tense. She felt hideously alone and bewildered. What could make Mother look so tired after such wonderful good news? If Priscilla were only there! No, Priscilla was never there any more. If there were only *some*body she could lean on, who would explain everything to her and tell her what to feel and do. If she only knew how to pray, as people in religious books do, putting on Jesus, or God, or a saint, this dreadful responsibility for things beyond your strength. If— Sumner came trotting around the corner of the house, looking very preoccupied with his own affairs. When he saw his young mistress standing on the porch, his own affairs vanished from his eyes. He bounded up hastily to her, leaping against her skirts, inviting her with laughing eyes to come and play.

It came over Matey that they were really going away from Hamilton, that they would never again need to see Mrs. Whitlock, that they were going to begin over again. She was seventeen years old, and it seemed to her that their removal settled everything. Everything would be different. Everybody would become somebody else. She forgot Mother's strange tired look. She forgot everything except that the locked door stood open. "Oh, Sumner, Sumner, *Sumner!*" she cried, running down the steps of the porch and racing wildly around and around on the grass, the delighted little dog leaping beside her. "What a kid that youngest Gilbert girl is," thought a member of the faculty, enviously, passing on the other side of the street, his head full of anxiety about a class that had flunked in appalling numbers.

So they moved again. The furniture was packed up, and a train bore them away from all that had made their lives for four years. Just as from the first Matey had thought it might, Hamilton disappeared behind the curtain of change. It was a good thing she had never tried to steady herself against it.

Yet she did not leave Hamilton with empty hands. She went forward into the next phase of her life, if not with her father's conquering tread, at least with three considerable additions to the armor which was to defend her in the years to come—an album or two of music, a fox-terrier, and a nigger-minstrel joke.

9

In a way Corinth was an improvement on Hamilton. Replacing a foreigner who had never been quite at ease in English, and who had long been half an invalid, Father scored the success of his life. He became very popular with his classes, and was so elated with the chance to use his old effects on a new audience that for more than a year he radiated good humor. Mother started nothing new at first, her hands being full with getting the new establishment running, and learning the ins and outs of the faculty circle. She seemed older, too, not quite so valiantly tireless, though she did not show again that queer lassitude—discouragement—fatigue—what had it been?—which startled Matey for an instant in Hamilton. That memory soon became as unreal as the older dream memory of Priscilla weeping as she prayed. *Priscilla* either weeping or praying! Priscilla was teaching French in a very exclusive girl's school in Chicago now, every year better paid, better dressed, more vivacious.

Time went on, another vacation came. They made a flying visit to France and saw the Vinets, still entirely themselves. Ziza and Matey made again an intimate contact. Sophomore year arrived. Matey wrote short-story themes, took notes on comparative Lit., messed around in the chemical lab., badgered the freshmen girls in mild imitation of her male classmates—and conditions at home began to drop back to normal again.

Mother was having a great deal to say about the duty of citizens. Equal suffrage was on its way, she told people. Women must prove their right to it by showing an interest. Her interest was in school improvement. As it grew stronger and more expressive, city officials became deferential to her; the house was soon full of committee meetings. The Principal of the largest high school, an energetic disciple of Lucy Stone, became an intimate friend. Presently was the intimate friend.

That summer the family did not go away from Corinth. Father was working on a collection of French prose specimens. Mother helped Miss Wood lay siege to the Board of Aldermen. Priscilla took a party of girls to England. Francis was visiting a classmate in Pittsburgh. Matey swam and boated on the lake, stayed outdoors as much as possible, for, busy as father was, he found time to—to—how could you describe what he did? He conveyed an atmosphere. He gave the impression that Mother's work was all very well in its naïve way, but was after all a little absurd, "worthy," well-intentioned, "American," Y.M.C.A.-ish. His manner to the city school officials who admired Mother led them to think him a very affable person, and emphasized to Mother (and Matey) his amused tolerance of such second-raters. The glint in his eye as he called Mother to the telephone when one of them asked for her made delicate tarnishing fun of their civic seriousness. He never allowed himself to get grim, never laid himself open to counter-attack as he had at Hamilton. It was all carried on under the surface. But nowadays Mother's nerves seemed less under control. She did not so often lie passive in baffled bewilderment. Sometimes she struck out in a blundering passion, like a maddened castaway in a jungle trying to fend off a swarm of mosquitoes with a club. Her suppressed resentment over the injustice of an intonation sharpened her own intonations to asperity for a long time afterward, just as it always had. But now sometimes it broke out an hour later, in quite unjustifiable anger over a harmless remark. Father always passed this over in a silence, to which he gave the effect of good-natured submission to injustice, by an uplifted eyebrow, a mild philosophic twisting of his mustache, and a certain down-dropped innocence of eyelid. Sometimes Mother was driven to an instant of open undignified fury, new to Matey. And at other times when Matey thought everything was quiet, she was startled by seeing angry tears in Mother's eyes. Her confused sympathies continually started out toward her mother, were continually chilled by the memory of the greedy hardness of her mother's triumph in the early days of Mrs. Whitlock. She did not know what to feel any more than what to think. So she felt as little as possible. She learned how, in a bad moment, to clench her hands as at the dentist's when he hurt, and keep very quiet lest the pain find her out in a more agonizing spot. She learned how to drug to somnolence the core of her being so that it lost some of its natural sensitiveness to hurts—and to everything else.

No, not to everything. She still had moments of penetrating joy in her music. She still had passing instants of strange transfiguration under the wideness of night skies. But more than music and night magic, immaterial stuff of the imagination as they were, Sumner it was who brought comfort to her daily life, solidly, prosaically, unmistakably real as he was, with his ingenious ability to pick up fleas where no other dog could find one. He was beginning to age somewhat, had fewer dog-interests of his own. Matey was everything to him. And he was more than dog to her.

She loved Priscilla and Ziza, too, the one as remote as the other. In spite of everything she really loved her parents. Sometimes it was even possible to live comfortably with them. But she had lost her old ability to relax during the comfortable periods. She knew now that they were brittle, that at any moment a chance reference or phrase or tone was enough to splinter them like a hammer on glass. Yet those impermanent intervals were sweet. To her, her parents were always kind. They sympathized when she suffered from the terrible incapacitating headaches which had grown on her ever since her little girlhood, and which resisted all attempts to find and cure a physical cause. And they sent her to the doctor when one eyelid developed a spasmodic twitch, that came and went for no apparent reason. They were anxious too when she fell into periods of lassitude, and she felt them relieved when, instead of falling like Priscilla into a half-decline, her health and spirits came back after a long romping walk with Sumner; although such relief was tinged with impatience they neither voiced nor concealed at the slightly silly, really almost distasteful absorption in a pet animal of so tall and physically so well-developed a young woman. They were on the whole satisfied with her for being a normal young person—perhaps not very interesting, a little lacking in zest and color, perhaps rather commonplace—she detected these added shades of judgment in her father's manner, when she had fallen into one of her listless moods of not caring.

But he was always kind, and sometimes playful with her. She discovered that he was amused by her undergraduate goings-on. It was a good safe subject, capable of expansion at need. Never—not once—did they drop their father-and-daughter "company manner" to speak of anything they really felt. By the time that Matey was nineteen that would have been as impossible as moving out of length, breadth, and thickness into another dimension. Mother was never playful, but she was kind too, earnestly kind. Her general attitude was expressed by a phrase she often used when she offered to do some shopping for Matey, "If you'll just tell me what you want, Matey dear, I'll try to get it for you." The difficulty of course was that Matey could not very well tell her what she wanted, for she did not, in her inexperience, know what was possible. Perhaps she had all there was to expect, all that anybody had.

It was in her junior year that Matey first registered in one of her father's classes. Always she had heard him praised as an almost inspired lecturer. "Remarkable how Gilbert manages to wake up his students! With all the handicap of dealing with a foreign literature he quickens their sodden Saxon minds to some sort of glimmering conception of writing as an art-form—far beyond anything they ever get from the English department." So spoke his contemporaries, and Matey's contemporaries echoed according to their sex, "Your father was perfectly *won*derful today," or "Gosh! That man certainly has got a line!"

She always answered, with the appearance of smiling pleasure, "You're very kind to say so." Why did it make her feel furtive to smile and look pleased!

She hated feeling furtive and sat down for the first time in her father's classroom, fluttering in a nervous hope that her escape from that kind of furtiveness was at hand. "Perhaps," murmured this hope in her heart, "perhaps when he teaches, he is different. Perhaps *that* is where he really—"

Father came in, leaned gracefully against the corner of his desk and began to speak. Matey stopped fluttering. Her heart sank. For an instant she stared bleakly at something from which it was her life-work to avert her eyes. Who was the brilliant vital lecturer holding his class enthralled? It was Father with his company manners on, showing off. That was all. She glanced around the intently listening class, surprised that they didn't feel at once, from the ring of his voice, that he didn't care a rap about Balzac or Flaubert, except as they gave him a chance to prove how clever he was. She looked down at her notebook, sourly recognizing the put-on intonation that Father never used when he was off the stage, when he was talking about something he really meant. But after all she was there to take notes. She began to write.

And at once, she realized that what he was saying was good, very good. More important, it was alive, as professors' lectures seldom were. And yet he had been saying those things for years (she recognized many of them). Lots of them were not even his own, but from other people's books. He must care about something, sincerely and intensely, to have it last him so long. Whatever it might be, his vivid interest did not come from Balzac's merits as a novelist. Matey knew that he'd have talked in that same flashing, eager, convinced way about chemistry (if he'd been professor in that department), or about life-insurance, or a two-headed calf. Perhaps this eloquence came from Father's much-talked-of magnetism. What *was* magnetism? It occurred to Matey now, keeping her eyes fixed on Father, that perhaps when you happened to be placed so you could look around back of it, you saw that it is no more than willingness to pay any price of apparent interest in any one or anything in order to hold the center of the stage.

Her pencil was as trained to automatic writing as that of any other college student. In all her classes, as she took notes, her young mind roamed about in fumbling speculations, very remote from the things she was scribbling down. "Balzac was the first author to base his stories solidly on the fact that cash and nothing else is the key to modern relationships." The twenty-year-old Matey jotted this statement down as the eight-year-old school-child had set down the rules for subtraction. Teacher said so. It was no new idea to her. Her history and economics notebooks were full of the same idea. She had never thought much about it, putting it down in her notebooks rather than in her mind. Like other girls of her generation, like most human beings, she had accepted docilely whatever was told her in a positive voice by those who claimed to know more than she. She did wonder sometimes how you could fit this theory of money as the basis of human life with the other theory you found in books, that sex was the key to everything (her mastery of French had opened to her some very adult books indeed). Not the sweet little love you found in English lyric poems—Matey privately thought those pretty enough but affected and silly—but a hideous malady that might strike you down at any moment and maim you for life.

Amour—people who wrote novels apparently thought of it as of a homicidal maniac let loose with an ax.

Matey wouldn't have taken this seriously on the say-so of books alone. But this conception of love was not new to her when she found it in nineteenth century novels. It only gave the clew to things she hadn't understood before—Mother's sick anger when a jolly young German cook had taken up to her room the jolly young man she said was her cousin—Priscilla's startled face of fear as she cried, "Never think of such things. I don't, ever!" —phrases she had heard whispered between girls in her high school—Faculty ladies hinting more than they whispered over a tea-table—a negro woman back in Hamilton calling pleasantries over an alley fence—Dominiqua and the kitchen terrace at Biriatou. So that was the choice that lay before you when you began to live. Either cold-blooded grabbing for money, or the long torture of passion. How could anybody not want to put off living as long as possible?

She thought about her classmates, her pencil racing along the page. They seemed in a positive hurry to begin. Or was that pretended? They talked as if they cared terribly about a lot of things which did not stir her—fraternities, college politics, attention from boys, religion, art, crushes, sports. But did they? Matey's ear, trained to detect real from put-on accents, recalled the lively untroubled voices in which they dissected their souls. In her heart she thought that probably all lives were encased like hers in company manners very different from the feelings underneath, and suspected that poetry and religion and romance and all the rest of it were also only different kinds of company manners.

The vivid little girl whose small person had been shaken by rapture and panic in the ups and downs of games, the adolescent who had trembled at the sunset and at the injustice of poverty, was growing into a dry young woman, every day adding another thickness to the sound-proof walls about her.

There were times, of course, in all classes, when she thought about what she was writing down in her notebook. One day she jotted down, "Balzac and Victor Hugo represent the difference between the two most opposite human temperaments. To have understood the difference between them is to have understood that things do not exist in themselves but as they appear to different minds. If you are naturally romantic-school in temperament, Balzac makes Victor Hugo seem like a demi-god, no less. If you are a realist, he makes Hugo seem like a posturing second-rate actor. Victor Hugo on the other hand makes Balzac seem (according to your temperament) either like the first eye that ever looked honestly on human life, or like an old-clothes dealer who thinks his account-book is the world."

Matey thought, "Now that's good! Even a football player could understand that! A general idea hitched to it, too. Father *is* good!"

She looked up and saw that he was heartily agreeing with her. On his lips was the almost invisible smile of self-congratulation so familiar to her. His eye roved plunderingly from one ingenuous face to another, reveling in the golden honey-dust of their admiration.

"Oh, I *wish* I could bring Sumner to class!" thought his daughter, fretfully.

Another day, her inattention was pierced by the statement, "The moral—though Stendhal is too fine a master to obtrude a moral—is that there are two ways to meet life; you may refuse to care until indifference becomes a habit, a defensive armor, and you are safe—but bored. Or you can care greatly, and live greatly—till life breaks you on its wheel."

"Why, that's just what I've been thinking!" thought Matey, startled, sitting up in her chair, "only better expressed. It's *true!*"

But was it safe to believe anything Father said when he was being eloquent?

10

One morning when Matey and her father were leaving the house, he slipped, fell over the old-fashioned foot-scraper on the door-step, and gave his ankle a long, jagged, though rather shallow cut. He got up—Matey running to help him—shaken, but relieved that he had not broken a bone, told Matey not to wait for him, went back into the house, washed off the blood, dirt, and bits of black thread from his sock which had been ground into the flesh, bandaged the torn place, and went to his classes as usual. Matey remembered very well his lecture that day.

His opening phrase, "This morning we take up *Salammbô,*" jerked her back four years as if his words had been a lasso thrown around her neck. *Salammbô!* The Mrs. Whitlock battle in the long war for prestige—Father's anger—Mother's ugly exultation—her own soreness of heart. And, most disheartening of all to remember, her childish delusion that because they were going to live in another place, everything was going to be different! She reached desperately for familiar defenses. "Quick! push it down out of sight! Think of something else. Repeat the exorcising, 'Don't let your forty cents fill your mind.'" In feverish haste she began to fill the page of her notebook with scribblings.

Professor Gilbert did not take his small accident seriously, nor did any one. The ankle was swollen and painful by night, and worse the next morning. Still he hobbled to his classes as usual. The second night after his fall he could not sleep for the pain, and on the morning of the third day, Matey's mother, looking rather tired, told her that she had been up since four, putting hot compresses on it, and although Father pooh-poohed the idea, she intended to call a doctor.

That was Thursday. Tuesdays and Thursdays were full days for Matey, her laboratory work coming on those afternoons. She had only half an hour at noon, and always lunched at the University. She chanced, that day, to sit down at a table with a group of girls from her own sorority. They were the kind who discuss the meaning of life. "We've got to get this sex-question straightened out," one of them was saying earnestly. "It's up to our generation. Our parents just muffed it. And it certainly is at the bottom of everything. Don't you feel that, Matey?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Matey neutrally, as she said most things.

"And yet," said another girl, "I am sure that the abolition of marriage would be a *great* mistake."

Matey swallowed a large bite from her sandwich. "Yes, I guess it would," she answered.

The others thought she was being prudish. "I believe you're sexually cold, Matey," one of them diagnosed.

"Well, maybe," said Matey, trying to think whether she were or not. "I like boys pretty well," she offered, "some of them."

"That's a sure sign of coldness," cried one of the girls tensely. "If you weren't sexually cold, you'd *hate* them! Sex-hostility, you know. Don't you ever read anything modern? Wells? Shaw?"

Matey examined her own mind and found nothing in it either for or against this theory, or any other; found the habit of drifting from day to day without any theories whatever. "Well, maybe," she agreed.

But when she came back from the counter with her dessert she sat down at another table to eat it. At the far end of this some boys on the tennis team were also earnestly discussing life. "The trouble with Bill," said one, thrusting out his jaw, "is his overhead! He can drive, and he can volley, but once you get on to his game, you can lob him to a fare-thee-well. That backstop practice of his is—"

As if through the wrong end of a telescope Matey saw a tiny mental snap-shot of Priscilla, furiously beating the ball up against the board fence. She wondered how Priscilla was getting along—*really*, that is.

When she went home late that afternoon she had almost forgotten about her father's ankle. As she stepped in through the front door, her mother was coming downstairs with two men, one of them the family doctor. They were looking very serious, and there seemed, from some words she caught, a question of taking Father to the hospital.

"Oh, as serious as that!" she commented, very much surprised.

Her mother and the doctors shifted their eyes to her face for an instant, looked at her as though they did not see her, and looking back at one another, made some arrangement about the coming of the ambulance.

"For heaven's sake, Mother!" she cried when the doctors had gone out. "Is it just that trouble with his ankle?"

"It may be nothing," said her mother in a steady voice; "they say not to worry. But they are rather afraid of blood-poisoning."

She went upstairs quickly.

Among the many things which Matey did not know was how serious blood-poisoning might be, but she was startled by something in the air of the house. She went upstairs on tiptoe and looked in through the open door at her father, lying in bed. His eyes were closed. She could see no more because the room was darkened. Her mother, sitting near the bed, put her finger on her lips and shook her head. Matey went on into the bathroom and began to wash her hands. Presently she came to herself and perceived that she had stood there washing her hands for a long time. What had been in her mind? Had she been thinking that something serious might come of this injury to Father? No, of course not. Impossible. A little cut on his ankle! She had skinned both knees ten times as much as that last winter playing basketball, and never thought of it again. She looked in once more, saw her father and mother in exactly the same position in the darkened room, and tiptoed away. Something about her mother's expression struck her. They were as a family seldom ill—Father had never been sick since Matey could remember. She had never before seen her mother taking care of him.

The ambulance came, Father was carried downstairs, a mere long bundle of bedding. Mother put on her hat to go with him. Matey felt as though she herself had become invisible or had dropped off the earth. But just before Mother left the house she remembered, turned, kissed her, and said, "I'll telephone from the hospital, dear, don't worry." She spoke the words clearly, but something about her tone made Matey wonder if she knew what she said.

As the ambulance drove away, Sumner appeared and thrust his cold little nose into Matey's hand. "Oh, Sumner!" she whispered. She sat down on the floor and took him into her arms. "I couldn't get along without you," she murmured in his ear. She knew this was a silly thing for a twenty-year-old girl who had read Kant and Plato to say to a dog. But it was true.

It was the maid's afternoon and evening out. Matey got herself and Sumner some dinner and ate hers, stopping between mouthfuls to make sure she had not missed the telephone bell. By eight o'clock she had had no message. She called up the hospital and asked for news. After a short wait a business-like woman's voice said, "Your mother was just sending a nurse to telephone you that you had better come to the hospital, Miss Gilbert."

Sumner jumped up against her as she put on her hat, thinking he was to be taken out for a walk. She did not know he was there, not even when she had pushed him back into the empty house as she shut the door behind her. Three quarters of an hour later she walked rapidly into the hospital office and said in a low tone that she was Professor Gilbert's daughter and could she see her father and mother.

The nurse in charge nodded, rang a bell, answered a telephone call, said firmly into the mouthpiece. "But you *said* it was the inch-and-a-half width you wanted!" and turning from this gave Matey a searching glance, and exclaimed impatiently, "See here, you're not going to faint, are you? You are pretty white. If you're too frightened, you stay right here in a chair. Do you *feel* sick?"

Matey had not known she was pale. With an effort she tried to discover how she felt. "I'll be all right, I think," she said, surprised to find her lips hard to move.

An attendant appeared, led her down a corridor, and opened a door into a brightly lighted room. A doctor standing inside lifted a chair and placed it noiselessly for her. Another doctor, their own, was standing by the bed, holding Father's right wrist. Matey's mother sat holding his other hand in both hers. His eyes were still closed. Under the white glare of light his sunken face was gray. Matey could not believe that face was her father's. All that she had thought of as Father was gone from it. As she looked, it drew together with a spasmodic contraction into sharp contorted lines, as if in a nightmare effort to get those sealed eyes open. When finally the heavy lids lifted it was to show his eyes fixed in a horrified unseeing stare on the ceiling. The gray pinched mouth opened too, and a sharp frightened voice cried out, "Jessica!"

"Here, Morris," said his wife, bending over him instantly.

He turned his face toward her, running a shaking hand up her arm, gazing at her as though through a mist, as though he must penetrate it to see for himself that she was there. Then slowly the anguished look of fear faded from his face; his eyes grew quieter, and the lids fell shut.

At the sound of his voice Matey had recoiled violently, her hand clutching at the back of her chair. When her father's face once more lay motionless on the pillow, aloof, remote, she began to cry silently, not thinking to raise her hands to her face. ✓

After a time she heard her father's voice, his own old voice, in a quiet reasonable tone asking collectedly, "Doctor, am I dying?" and then instantly, without waiting for an answer the loud terrible voice of panic burst out, *"Jessica, you haven't gone?"*

"Right beside you, Morris dear," said Mother's voice—oh, was that *Mother's* voice? Could it be Mother's voice? Matey dashed the tears away enough to see, and watched again that unbearable look of terror fade away into quiet as he looked into Mother's eyes . . . could those be Mother's eyes?

The door opened noiselessly and a nurse appeared. She looked from the group around the bed to the girl weeping silently on her chair. One of the doctors half turned to her; a question and answer passed worldlessly. She stooped over Matey. "Perhaps you'd better wait outside," she whispered with a kind intonation.

"Jessica! Don't go away!" in that piercing wail of mortal fear.

"No, Morris dear, I won't leave you," said Matey's mother, lifting his hand to her bosom. The tears were running down her cheeks, but her voice was quite steady.

"Ah, Jessica . . ." said her father, in a deep murmur of exhaustive relief.

"Yes, yes, I'll go," whispered Matey to the nurse. She followed her stumblingly to a room down the corridor. There was a bed in it, across which Matey fell. She could scarcely breathe for her sobbing.

"You mustn't give way so," said the nurse gently. "While there's life there's hope always. The doctors haven't given him up at all yet, you know."

Matey heard these words, but little of their meaning reached her mind. It was not filled, it was not even touched by alarm for her father's life—it was bursting, cracking, all but crushed under the immensity of this new knowledge of more between Father and Mother than she had ever guessed— Why, in some way of their own . . . they *belonged* to each other, and knew it.

Oh, Mother's look of tenderness and sorrow! Father's murmur of relief when he knew she was still there . . . !

So Matey had understood nothing—had it all wrong—so all those years of her childhood had been shadowed and chilled by . . .

It came over her so bitterly that she cried aloud as though defending herself from an intolerable reproach. "But I never knew . . ."

Across the years the child she had been looked reproachfully at her, the little girl standing in the cold shadow—if she could only make her hear! "No! no!" cried the Matey who lay across the hospital bed and sobbed. "No! It doesn't mean what you think! There is more! That is not all! *Don't* grow up thinking that is all!"

But she flung herself against the barrier of time. The little girl had grown up thinking that was all.

That child of the past—there were before her long crooked years that never could be lived straight. "But I never knew . . ." sobbed Matey, over and over.

The door opened behind her. She sat up, blinded by her tears. A group of strangers stood there, well-dressed, indifferent strangers who looked at her in surprise. She slid off the bed, staring back at them stupidly. How long had she been there? What was she doing in this strange place?

"Oh, I beg pardon, I thought you said this was the room, nurse," said a man's voice, speaking crisply, as people do who have nothing particular to care about.

A nurse appeared behind them. She came gently up to Matey, put her arm about her shoulders, and drew her through the little group of newcomers.

"Poor girl," she said to them in a low voice. "You must excuse her. Her father has just died."

PART TWO

I

THE first tulip was out in the front yard of the Rustdorf Savings Bank, and when Adrian Fort came stepping along, whistling *"Auprès de ma blond-e,"* he stopped to look at it. Then he glanced up at a small white cloud contributing an ingenuous pearliness to its corner of the universe, and marched briskly up the gravel walk to the building, whistling "Turkey in the Straw."

There was, he reflected, no reason for cheerfulness on his part in this what-next period of his life; but little ground for anxiety either, he that is down having no fall to fear. The spring air was spirited, the yellow tulip like a small sun. On the front porch of the Bank, Adrian turned to look at the flower again, waiting till the vibrations of its pure color reached his inner eye. "Monet was the fellow who took off our blinders for that sort of thing," he thought to himself, unlocking the door and stepping into the shuttered twilight of the small building.

He pulled up the shades, opened the window, and leaned out to push back the shutters. Oblique rays of spring clarity poured in on the black grillwork above the counter. Beyond the slanting gold of these lines lay a sizable high-ceilinged plain old room, with quiet gray and brown surfaces of wall and floor. A side window, the commonplace squares of its cross-bars foreshortened to a sprightly pattern of diagonals, made an amusing break in the soberness of the planes about it. Adrian stood for a moment considering the play of light in this composition.

As he moved toward the safe he began to whistle "There'll be a *hot* time . . ." "Decidedly," he thought, noting the lively tune that had come into his head, "decidedly, it does not take much of a Monet feather or a Vermeer straw to tickle this infant." He swung open the heavy door and extracted the cash-drawer, ledger, and other paraphernalia of the day's work.

"Good morning, Mrs. Terbosh." The first depositor was pushing her bank book and a ten-dollar bill through the cashier's window. "Oh, no, Father's all right. Aunt Tryntje insisted that the storm door couldn't be taken down without his personal attention, that's all. He'll be here a little later. But I can enter this deposit for you, all right." . . . "Well, yes, a good many people have asked me that since my return. But how would you expect Rustdorf to seem to a Rustdorf boy? If you'd been living in Yokohama would Rustdorf look different when you came back? Did it ever? Here's your bank book. I entered the interest too, while I was about it. I noticed you hadn't brought it in since the first of the year. . . . Oh, that was why you wanted to see Father. Well, I never heard of this particular oil company, but I know Father would advise against it. Except of course for folks who have money they don't mind risking. Father sticks to it that anything that promises to pay too much can't help being risky. He always says he doesn't advise people against taking risks. . . . 'What is life but one long risk?' . . . you know how Father talks. But he does against taking a risk without knowing you're doing it. Leave the circular here and I'll ask him when he comes in. Remember me to Madeleine and John. I hear their baby is a wonder. What are they going to name him?" . . . "Myndert? *Myndert?* Oh, yes, for John's Father. And Terbosh for your family." The young man laughed. "Say, listen! Myndert Terbosh LeRoy. . . . And you can stand there and ask me whether Rustdorf is changed!"

Still smiling over this small joke when his father came in, he passed it on.

"The child's lucky they didn't name him Van den Bogert for his grandmother's family," remarked the older Adrian. He took his hat from his thickly thatched gray head, hung it on a peg near the window, and went into the small inner office, remarking drily, "They will, the next one."

Adrian, tearing the paper from a roll of nickels, began to whistle abstractedly, looking out of the side window at the tennis courts on the Square. They had an early-in-the-season, rain-channeled aspect of desolation, but Adrian, who knew every inch of them, estimated that it would not take him long to put them in shape, the frost being out of the ground.

A young girl came in, nodded soberly to Adrian, pushed her bank book through the window, and told him that she wanted to take out fifteen dollars. "I'm glad you're here, Adrian, and not your Father. I was afraid your Father would look hard at me. I'm taking it out to go to New York to buy a hat."

"Now, Janet Whiteley!" came from the inner office. "I wish you kids would ever get things straight. How many times will I have to tell you that I *like* to have you spend your savings for something you want? I'm just worn out, trying to get through your heads that that's the whole point of saving anyhow, whether it's money or time or health—so that when you really want something you'll have the wherewithal to get it."

"All right for *you*, Mr. Fort!" the girl answered. "On the strength of that I'll just buy my hat on Fifth Avenue instead of Fourteenth Street."

Laughing and looking lightened, she fluttered out into the street. Adrian's mind went back to tennis. "Dirck Davis and I could get those courts ready to play on in two half-Saturdays," he thought.

A tall girl in gray pushed open the door of the bank with a free graceful thrust of a long arm, hesitated, and looking back over her shoulder at a fox-terrier behind her, asked, "Are dogs allowed in here?" She put the question vaguely to Adrian, having glanced at him without seeing him, as at a ticket-seller behind his window. Adrian thought he detected in her low-toned speech a faint trace of an accent. Perhaps only that the syllables were more neatly articulated from the teeth out than is usual with English words.

"Yes, indeed," said Adrian gravely through the cashier's wicket. "Dogs and babies and cats come into the Bank quite as often as depositors."

The young lady flashed a quick look at him between surprise and uncertainty. Adrian saw that she had gray eyes, which even in that unpremeditated glance gave him an impression of guardedness and reserve.

"You're very kind," she said formally, with a slight cool smile, evidently no more than part of the formula for acknowledging a small courtesy. "We have a responsive live wire before us," thought Adrian, slightly nettled. He wondered who she could be.

Perhaps come in to ask her way. Certainly no depositor. Ever since he could remember, Adrian had known them all by sight.

The fox-terrier had walked in past her and now stood looking up at Adrian behind the grill. Adrian looked back cordially. He liked dogs. No young-ladyish guardedness about those eyes!

"I would like to speak to Mr. Adrian Fort," stated the young lady.

"I am Adrian Fort," said Adrian, passably astonished and looking it.

The young lady was even more so. "Why . . ." she murmured, looking dubiously through the cashier's window. Adrian was rather nondescript as to hair, eyes, and skin, and nothing particular as to figure, bearing, and small sandy-red mustache. But nobody could mistake the fact that he was not much older than the newcomer. She went on, "I had thought Mr. Fort would be . . . would be a much . . ."

"Oh, now I have it," said Adrian. "Of course. It's my father you want to see, and you must be Miss Penelope Gilbert, come in answer to Father's letter."

His father came out hastily from the inner office, his snatched-off spectacles in one hand, the other outstretched. "Come in, come in, Miss Gilbert. I hardly expected to see you so soon." He was outside the counter now, her hand in his as he went on. "So this is Cousin Constance's great-great-niece. You're very welcome indeed. My son, Adrian, Miss Gilbert. Won't you come into my office?"

("What under the sun is there in that desperately banal greeting to make her look surprised?" Adrian wondered.)

He held the half-door of the counter open to let her pass, and as she hesitated, guessed that she would like to have her dog with her. "Come on, sir," he whistled cordially in dog-language, snapping his fingers at the fox-terrier and motioning him in. But he was not rewarded this time even by a formal smile of thanks.

The three went into the inner office, where, the door remaining open, Adrian could hear and see as if they were still in the same room. Miss Gilbert sat down in the battered leather arm-chair in which all Rustdorf had sat at one time or another, laying secrets of their pocketbooks down on the table under the eyes of Adrian's father and grandfather. This visitor looked to Adrian as though she had the habit of not laying her secrets down on any table whatever. The momentary expression of surprise had disappeared. She seemed, Adrian thought, as self-possessed, not to say cautious, a young person as he had ever seen, with a face as impulsive and open as a padlocked door. But she certainly was graceful. There was something classic about the way her long arms and legs fell into quiet restful lines.

Her small dog sat soberly by her knee. He was an old fellow, Adrian could see that now; his face had the wizened sadness of elderly fox-terriers. As Miss Gilbert prepared herself to listen, she put out a gloved hand to stroke him. He turned his head up toward her, an expression of adoration in his sunken brown eyes.

"Oh, well, a dog will love anybody!" Adrian told himself. And then turning the blade inward with an accurate practiced thrust, he thought, "Vanity, vanity! Certainly all is vanity. Because a good-looking young woman refuses to observe that I exist, I turn cynic."

He listened but absently to the explanation his father was giving of Cousin Constance's curious little bequest. It was an old story to him. For years it had been one of the few small picturesque oddities in the commonplace routine of the bank. His father was now, by the aid of a condensed table of compound interest rates, showing their visitor how the original five thousand had grown since the old lady's death to the slightly more than eleven thousand which was now at the disposal of her great-great-niece. "It was not a very business-like arrangement, Miss Gilbert," he said, "but one had to get on with old Cousin Constance as best one could. She called me in one day when I was walking past, told me what was in her mind, and then and there signed over to me the securities she wanted me to sell for her. It was no way to do and I tried to have something in writing, or some one else in as witness. But she specially did not wish this, as part of her plan was that no one should know about it—especially not your father. She did not get on very well with your father, to tell the truth, as you probably have heard. Cousin Constance was . . . well, perhaps not the most amiable of characters; although she had reasons for that. I tried to explain to her the danger there would be if I should die before she did and before I could regularize the transaction. But she cut me short . . ."

("Yelled and threw a paper-weight at his head, was the version I always heard," thought Adrian, amused by his father's decorum of wording.)

". . . and assured me that she would die before I did. As a matter of fact she was even then very ill, though we had no idea of it. No doctor was ever allowed to set foot in her house, you know. She was in her grave before the money came in from the sale of those securities, but she had told me just what her wishes were, so I started the account in your name, as she had specified. The gift is entirely without conditions. She didn't even leave a message for you. But from her talk it was clear enough what was in her mind. Your family had been here on a brief visit not long before and some little incident or other had convinced her that you showed unusual intelligence . . . well, I'm not sure that she didn't mean unusual character. . . ."

(Adrian smiled again at his father's expurgated version of Cousin Constance's—"The child has real brains. But that's nothing. Morris' children would have brains, of course. The miracle is that she's honest in spite of his false egotistical blood running through her!")

". . . I thought she was perhaps rather imagining than observing," his father was saying. "You were really a very small girl then, only seven, I think . . . it was while your father was still professor at Logan Bluffs; you were just beginning school. I ventured to point out that it was rather early to have any proofs either of your brains or of your manner of using them, but she wouldn't listen to me. She had made up her mind. Well, she wouldn't need much proof. You were always her favorite. It was a pleasure to me to see the satisfaction she took in leaving this small bequest, the only personal one she made. The rest of her money went, you probably heard, to endow beds in the hospital at Poughkeepsie."

Adrian wondered what would be the first comment of the legatee. From the startled expression which had again come into her face, he gathered that the news of her inheritance had made the strongest possible impression on her. Well, cash always did.

She said, her rather low voice slightly raised by emphasis, "But, Mr. Fort . . . how did you ever know we lived in Logan Bluffs? How did you know my father was Professor there? How *could* you know when I began to go to school!" These questions came out in a crescendo of surprise.

"Why, my dear young lady, you are a relative of mine." said

Mr. Fort. "Why shouldn't I know something about you?"

"A relative!" said Miss Gilbert. "I didn't know we *had* . . ." she stopped as if fearing to sound ungracious.

Mr. Fort laughed. Adrian liked to hear his father laugh. "Well, perhaps people outside Dutchess County wouldn't call it much of a kinship. One of your great-grandmothers was a sister of one of my grandfathers."

"And our Aunt Connie, too, was a . . ."

"She was one of those forty-second cousins of everybody's with which Rustdorf is filled to this day. Why, you have a townful of relations here. We've been looking forward to seeing you, to hear the news from your branch of the family. After Cousin Constance's death there was of course nothing to bring your parents back here. We heard very little, and nothing direct . . . the newspaper notices of your father's death, and then last year, your mother's. I thought often of Jessica with so much sympathy after your father's death had left her alone. I lost my own wife, many years ago, and I know what that solitude is. How *was* your mother, during those later years?"

Miss Gilbert did not answer at once. She looked down first at her gloved hands and then at the dog by her side. He turned his old head toward her again, and as she leaned toward him, jumped up stiffly upon her lap. She put a hand lightly on his head. Adrian noticed for the first time that she had beautiful hands, large, shapely, long-fingered.

"I hope I haven't said anything to . . ." began Mr. Fort with compunction.

"No, oh, no!" she told him quickly, raising her head and showing a face in which there was neither caution nor neutrality, "No, it's not that. But I can't tell you how strange it seems to me to come here . . . I thought of course it would be just business . . . and find that you know about us. That you did, all this time, when I never dreamed that we had anybody who . . . We've moved about a good deal, you know; never very long in one place. Always with people we hadn't known for very long, and who didn't know much about us. It's . . . it's very . . ." she hesitated for a word, did not find it, and went on, her voice shaking a little, "I don't think that I've heard anybody call my mother Jessica since the day my father died."

("I'm all off about this girl!" thought Adrian hastily. "What made me think she was conventional and shallow?")

His father was saying, "But I used to play with your mother when she was a little girl and came here from Newburgh in the summers to visit her Van Benthuysen cousins. And I used to know your father, too, when he came once in a while to see Cousin Constance. I went over to their wedding in the Newburgh church. In fact one of my old shoes had the honor of landing on top of their carriage as they drove away, and disappeared with them."

Miss Gilbert said again wonderingly, "You can't think how strange it seems to me! Mother as a little girl! . . . and their wedding day . . . ! I think I never thought of my parents as just like anybody else . . . who had been just a little girl and boy sometime."

Adrian heard his father's voice say seriously, "My dear child, how unfair! I am a parent myself; let me speak up for them. It is cruelty to any one not to remember that he was once nothing more than a little boy, and never can become very different from any one else."

"Is it?" murmured the girl. She kept her eyes fixed on him as though (thought Adrian) she were getting from his aspect some unspoken comment on his words. Then she said, "But, Mr. Fort, all that was so long ago!"

"Why, it's not more than thirty-three or four years ago," objected Mr. Fort laughingly; "that's certainly not too long for ordinary human feelings to survive. . . ."

"Isn't it?" Her eyes rested deeply on his.

Over his ledger Adrian thought, "What is that oddity in her accent? Funny how it makes her sound sort of appealing."

His father was standing up now. "See here, Miss Gilbert, I must have some old photographs with your mother in them . . . yes, I'm sure of one, a group of us playing croquet on the Van Benschotens' front lawn . . . side-whiskers and crinoline. It would amuse you. But of course your mother must have had a copy too. Perhaps you know it."

"No, I never saw any old photographs. There were some, I think, but they were in a box that was burned up in a freight wreck the time we moved from Logan Bluffs . . . no, it was moving from Lincoln to Millerton it was lost, I think. When you move a good many times, things do get lost."

("It's a sort of *French* accent!" said Adrian to himself.)

His father came out to where he was leaning over the ledger. "Adrian, take Miss Gilbert over to the house, won't you, and ask

Aunt Tryntje to get out some of the old photograph albums. I'd go myself, but I'm expecting John Davis in about his mortgage. Won't you leave your dog here, Miss Gilbert? He'd be no trouble."

"Oh, no, thanks, he always goes with me."

"I'll be enchanted to go," said Adrian, laying down an inkless pen. "Tell Mr. Davis, will you, Father, to pass the word along to Dirck that the tennis courts are about ready to work on."

He used this as a gambit to start talk as they walked down the front steps. "Do you play tennis, Miss Gilbert?"

"Yes, I play. Not so well as my sister. She's quite an expert—won the Middle Western ladies' championship last year." She spoke in a correct, colorless manner.

"Yes," thought Adrian, "her conversation *is* like what I expected! And she still hasn't observed that I exist."

But at that moment Mr. Fort put his head through the side window of the Bank and called, "Oh, Adrian, hold on a minute. I wonder if Miss Gilbert couldn't stay to have lunch with us. We'd be so glad to have you, Miss Gilbert. And I'll get my aunt to set out the spoons with the Van Benthuysen initials on them. Your mother always ate with those when she had meals with us."

The girl glanced at Adrian almost as if consulting him about what to answer. No, it couldn't be her accent, he decided, that made her seem appealing, for she seemed so now and she hadn't said a word. Perhaps it was a trick of turning her head. At any rate he was moved to say hastily and heartily, "Yes, do stay."

"Thank you," she called back to the older Adrian, hanging out of the window; "I'll be glad to."

As they walked on, "Your father seems such a kind man," she said.

Adrian saw in the turn of her phrase an opportunity to exhibit a small verbal neatness. "Father doesn't seem anything he's not," he said lightly. "He *is* a kind man."

At this she looked for an instant straight at him, said, "Doesn't he?" in an enigmatic accent and looked away again.

Adrian was so taken aback that he was on the point of asking stupidly, "Doesn't who?" when in a polite tone, "Where *is* your house?" she asked him.

"I can't make connections with her at any point," thought Adrian. "What in the world was all that about?" Aloud he answered, "That low gray stone one across the Square, with the locust trees about it."

Like a swallow swerving suddenly upward, her voice broke into fresh personal vividness. "Oh . . . locusts! Why, I believe I can remember them in Rustdorf. I'd forgotten those trees were *locusts!*"

"There are plenty of them all around," said Adrian. "Probably the ones you remember are those in Cousin Constance's back yard."

"Why! Are they *still* there?" asked the girl.

Adrian laughed. "You make me feel like my father. It's not so long since you were a little girl. Not long enough for a tree even to notice."

"I suppose . . . I never thought of it before . . ." her voice dropped to a solemn lower note . . . *"Does Aunt Connie's house still stand?"*

"Sure it does," said the young man, finding this naïveté unexpected and pleasing. "There it is, down the street, the fourth house on the right. What would you think could happen to it?"

"I can't make you understand," said the girl, "how strange it seems to me that it has been here, really, all this time. And you and your father knowing about us. It's like—as if you saw there had been all along another dimension to things. Why, the first thing I can remember is Aunt Connie's tulip bed."

"We can go over and see if any tulips are out in it now," said the young man. "Or no, we'd better go first and tell Aunt Tryntje about lunch."

"Is that a real name?" asked the girl.

"Well, sort of real. Katherine's a great family name around here. The Dutch liked it. And Katrintje is short for Katherine, and Tryntje's short for that. Aunt Tryntje's great on old-time ways and it suits her to have the same nickname her something-or-other great-grandmother had. Her real name is Miss Katherine Brinckerhoff Van den Bogert."

"Goodness gracious!" murmured the girl, smiling. It was the first time her seriousness had been broken. She looked very nice and young when she let herself smile, Adrian thought.

"But you'd better call her Aunt Tryntje," he told her. "You are certainly a relative of hers. Anyhow everybody's called her Aunt Tryntje so long she's probably forgotten she has any other name."

"I know," said the young lady; "when you said just now at the Bank that I must be Penelope Gilbert it sounded like somebody else. I'm always called Matey."

"Matey!" said Adrian. "What a nice nickname. I never knew a Matey."

"Why do you find it nice?" she asked in what was evidently a sincere wonder. "A good many people find it rather silly-sounding, I think."

"Oh, what it seems to mean. Comradely. Somebody who shares things with you. Shipmate on the voyage of life . . . that sort of thing."

She considered. "Well, I never thought before of any meaning to it. I always took it just like any name . . . such as Gladys or Bernice."

"It's a real privilege," he told her with feeling, "to rescue you from Gladys or Bernice. I would hate to think of anybody being stranded for life on one of those swampy malarious islets."

This time she laughed out loud. "How ridiculous!" she said, appreciatively.

Adrian thought to himself, "I sort of like this girl."

He decided that he went on liking her, later, as she sat opposite Aunt Tryntje in their living-room, a photograph album on her knee, listening to Aunt Tryntje's exposition of her ancestry and its ramifications. Several times he thought he had detected her eyelids flickering down over her quiet eyes to hide amusement. And so, when the old lady turned her back on them to look for yet another daguerreotype, he caught the girl's eye, expecting her as a matter of course to exchange with him a smile over Aunt Tryntje's genealogical mania. But she did not allow herself to understand this invitation to laugh at her old hostess, and returned nothing but a pleasant nod and smile of reassurance.

"Why, she's a *nice* girl!" thought Adrian.

He looked at her with respect which he soon forgot in his pleasure over a faint light striking up on the shadowed side of her face which brought out the details of the low-relief modeling in her cheek. The light was reflected, he noticed, from his father's old Montaigne, glossy with long handling, which lay on the table beside her.

"And now," said Aunt Tryntje, "I hope I've got you all straightened out about the way the Smiths are related to the Howlands. Just remember about those English names in the family, Whiteley and Russell and Smith—they were Quakers driven out of New England, every one of them. *But not the Browns*. They'd gone to Holland first—well, well, I mustn't go into that now. It's your turn. Do tell me about your family." She turned to Adrian. "Doesn't she look a little like Cousin Mary Howland? Something about the way the eyes are set in, far apart and rather deep. Cousin Mary's mother was a LeRoy, you know, and the LeRoy eyes are all . . ."

"Well," said Adrian judiciously, "as I only remember Cousin Mary when she weighed two hundred and twenty and wore a wig . . ."

The visitor broke into laughter. Adrian guessed that she had been for some time longing for a decent excuse to laugh.

"Oh, to be sure," said Aunt Tryntje, "I forgot you weren't your father." She turned back to the visitor, "I do really want to know all your news."

"I don't know where to begin," said the girl. "I never met anybody who was in the least interested in my family as such. Most people I know haven't any idea whether I have any family, beyond the members they see once in a while."

"For mercy's sake, child, where have you lived?" cried Aunt Tryntje.

"Pretty much everywhere," said the visitor without enthusiasm.

"You were in Corinth, weren't you, when your father died?"

"Why, did you *all* know about us?" exclaimed the girl, startled.

"I should hope I wouldn't lose all track of Martha Whiteley's grandchildren. Your grandmother Whiteley was my first cousin, and my favorite relative. Well, go on, did you stay on long in Corinth?"

"We stayed another year there, till I graduated. Then I went to France for a year's study. I have some old friends in Paris, a French family. I have stayed with them more or less ever since I was a little girl. I like them all very much and one of the daughters is my best friend. I lived with them that year and studied at the Sorbonne. When I came back I got a position in the French department at Western Reserve University. Teaching French seems the easiest thing, of course, for my sister and me."

"And did your mother make a home for you?"

"No." The girl paused as if thinking what words to use. "No, I have usually lived in boarding-houses. Mother . . . after Father's death . . . Mother became very much absorbed by her

Church. The Church we went to in Corinth was very ritualistic and . . ." She stooped down to where her little dog sat, and stroked his shoulder thoughtfully as she went on, "I find I hardly know how to speak of these things. Nobody among my acquaintances in the places where I've lived lately ever knew enough about us to ask. And my brother and sister knew, anyhow, so we didn't need to talk about them among ourselves."

She made this statement soberly in a matter-of-fact tone, but Adrian said to himself, with conviction, "It's her *eyes* that make her seem appealing." And then remembered with surprise that he had found them guarded and cold.

"Perhaps I oughtn't to have asked you about . . ." began Aunt Tryntje.

"No, oh, no, I think it's *sweet*, you caring to know," said the girl, "and there is nothing troubling about it, or hard to speak of. Mother just became more and more absorbed by the church services. There are a good many of them in a High Church. *You* know."

"No, I don't; we are all Friends," said Aunt Tryntje firmly. Then, seeing that the girl did not understand, she explained, "Yes, I know, it does seem odd, Forts and Van den Bogerts being Quakers, but my mother was a Willetts, you know."

"Oh," said the girl, lowering her eyelids for a moment. She went on, "Well, there are a great many services, for the different church seasons and hours of the day. Enough to take up about all one's time. They seemed a great comfort to Mother, though she'd never cared much about going to church before. And then she became a religious."

"A what?" asked Aunt Tryntje.

"A sister, you know, in a Church Order. An Order that runs an orphanage near Corinth. That was where she went to live. She seemed always very busy and satisfied, and we children were so glad for her."

"But . . ." said Aunt Tryntje, "but . . ." She looked up at the ceiling as if making an inner calculation, murmured, "Hmmm, the Van Benthuysens *are* all mystics. But Jessica never . . ." Looking back at the girl, she asked with the privileged bluntness of old age, "Was there some person in the Order she . . . thought a good deal of?"

With a look of surprise, the girl answered, "Yes, she had come to be great friends with the Mother Superior."

"Oh," said Aunt Tryntje.

"Of course, friendships aren't allowed in religious orders very much, and once she was in, they didn't see much of each other. What interested Mother most was running the business part of their orphanage. She was wonderful at that."

"Well . . ." said Aunt Tryntje, and then, "How about your brother and sister?"

The visitor began, "Priscilla is in . . ." and was interrupted by an exclamation from Aunt Tryntje. "Oh, they *did* name her Priscilla, didn't they?"

"Yes," said the visitor, again surprised. She waited for an explanation, but Aunt Tryntje merely said, "Nothing. It's not one of the family names like yours, that's all. Go on."

"Priscilla has taught French in a girls' school near Chicago for quite a time. It's a private school, sort of finishing seminary, not very serious teaching, but she gets a much larger salary than I, than any college teacher."

"What is she like?"

"Well, she's tall and blonde and very nice-looking. Plays awfully good tennis, and often takes parties of girls abroad in the summer. That pays very well. We've all been abroad a good deal. In France, that is, because of Father's work, and now ours."

"Is *she* High Church and religious?" inquired Aunt Tryntje.

"Oh, no, not a *bit!*" said the girl hastily. And paused an instant as if startled by some unexpected thought. But she added no qualification to her statement.

"And your brother?"

"He graduated from the Harvard Law School the year Father died. And he's in a law firm in Pittsburgh."

"Pittsburgh!" cried Aunt Tryntje. "Why Pittsburgh?"

"Well, one of his classmates was a Pittsburgh fellow whose father is a successful lawyer there. Francis used to go to visit them in the vacations a good deal. They all liked him in the family. People do generally. And the father gave Francis a chance in his firm. He's doing very well. Francis always does."

"Well, I must say you sound like an independent, successful set of modern young people, well prepared to take care of yourselves in the world," said Aunt Tryntje admiringly, "as though you were getting whatever you wanted out of life."

("No, she's not!" cried Adrian to himself with instant certainty.)

"Is your brother married?" asked Aunt Tryntje.

"Not yet," said the girl. For the first time there was a little dryness in her accent. Adrian took this for a sign that she had stood about all of Aunt Tryntje that could be expected. He rose to his feet. "I promised Miss Gilbert to take her over to Cousin Constance's to see if the tulips are out there. She thinks she remembers them."

"That must have been when you were sent on to her by yourself to stay with her in '87," said Aunt Tryntje accurately. "I remember you very well—one of the nicest little four-year-old girls I ever saw. Constance used to say you had as good a time living as a kitten or a puppy. Once she told me, 'Matey's little face is like a nasturtium blossom.' And now isn't it like some thing in a book—an English book, I mean—the way she left this money to you? I hope my nephew told you what she said, 'I want that child to have some money all her own to do just what she wants with, without anybody's approval or consent. By the time she's twenty-four, she'll know what that is.' That was *her* age, you know, when she wanted so much to go away to study medicine. I suppose that's why she didn't want you to know about it till that age."

("Can you beat it!" thought Adrian. "First mention of that cash . . . not made by the heiress, at that!")

Aunt Tryntje was running on, "We've wondered, every once in a while, whether as you grew up there *was* some special thing you'd set your heart on, as she had."

She waited for an answer to this. Their visitor turned her face away and seemed to look fixedly at a steel engraving of Washington on the wall. She murmured in a very low voice, "I should say that the matter with me is that there is *nothing* I want very much to do."

It sounded as though she had not intended to say this aloud. Adrian felt a hasty impulse to help her pass over what was perhaps an inadvertent confession. But was that really what she had said? Perhaps he had imagined it as the sum total of his impression of her. At any rate, on the chance that she would like to have the subject changed, he said prosaically, "It's not enough money to do *any*thing with! Not half so much as it seemed, probably, to a person of Cousin Constance's generation. What, in this anno Domini of 1907 could anybody do with five hundred dollars a year?"

"There are people living in comfort on that in Rustdorf, this minute," said Aunt Tryntje with dignity.

"Then I'll put it, what could unfortunate people forced to live out of Rustdorf do with it?" amended Adrian. Had the girl really said that, or had he imagined it?

"Well, take her along to Constance's house anyhow," said Aunt Tryntje, looking at the clock and letting Adrian have his point. "Peter Russell has taken the children off to Fonteynkill today and the house is shut up." She explained to the girl, "Constance's nephew Peter Russell inherited the house. His wife died a year or so ago, leaving him with a great batch of little girls to bring up. The forlornest old widower you ever saw. He was too old to get married in the first place, and now to be left alone with a family—! Two of the children are delicate in health, too." She turned back to Adrian. "But thee can go around into the back yard. Penelope, would thee like to leave thy little dog here . . . for I'm not going to go on calling Cousin Martha's granddaughter 'Miss,' nor saying 'you' as if thee were a stranger."

("How *can* Aunt Tryntje not have noticed what that dog is to her?" Adrian asked himself impatiently.)

"Oh, I'd like very much to have you call me by my first name," the girl was saying. "But no, thanks, Sumner always goes with me."

"Sumner!" thought Adrian.

As they went down the steps and along the walk, Aunt Tryntje from the front door was calling instructions to Adrian. "Don't forget to show her the Washington house, and the house where Aunt Dina died, and tell her what Rustdorf means, and that it should be Rustdorp, and point out Barnegat . . ." Her voice died away as they advanced across the Square.

"Aunt Tryntje's a pippin, isn't she!" said Adrian.

"I never saw anybody in the least like her," said the girl.

"I'll bet you never did!" said Adrian.

The girl answered steadfastly, "No, I didn't mean it that way," and turned the conversation, asking, "What was that she said about saying 'you' as though I were a stranger?"

"Oh, she's one of the older Friends who still 'adhere to plain speech.'" At the look of bewilderment in his listener's face he laughed and explained, "In Quaker language 'plain speech' doesn't mean saying disagreeable things and admiring yourself for being honest, but the use of 'thee' for 'you.'"

"Oh, yes, I remember, I've heard about that," said Miss Gilbert. "Like the French use of *tu*."

"I know an elder or two who wouldn't enjoy hearing you compare it to French usage," remarked Adrian.

"Do you say 'thee' too?" she asked.

"Well, most younger Friends don't much, any more, except maybe for little children. I try to remember to do it for Aunt Tryntje, because she doesn't like it if I don't."

"It sounds picturesque," said the visitor.

"That's no better than comparing it to the French!" Adrian warned her.

She looked amused and asked another question, "What is the 'Washington house'? Where he slept overnight?"

"No. Rustdorf antiquity hasn't any such violent episodes as that. This is a house in front of which he stopped his horse and asked a little girl in the front yard if she would give him a drink of water from the well. But she happened to be one of our great-grandmothers . . . yours too, of course . . . so we are all brought up on what he said and what she said, and what was the color of his horse's tail, and so on."

"A great-grandmother of mine? I'd like to hear about it."

"There's nothing to hear, although as she grew older it took her longer and longer to tell it. My father, as a little boy, often heard her. She had worked out a peroration which never varied—'And then President Washington bowed over his saddle—*thank God! I remembered to courtesy!*—and riding magnificently, as he did everything, disappeared from my sight. But not from my mind. To have looked into the living eyes of a man greater in character than Julius Caesar or Napoleon . . . it gave me an undying faith in the human race.' "

"That's a nice peroration," said the girl.

"Here, this is the house. Aunt Tryntje will be sure to ask you about it. That's why this is called Washington Street." He looked at the muddy ruts and added, "Some day we're going to pave it, too, in his honor."

They stopped before a story-and-a-half white house, a little sagging as to roof and askew as to perpendicular, but freshly painted, with ruffled curtains at the little windows, and a huge lilac bush guarding the low door.

"Well, so he *was*, greater in character than Julius Caesar or Napoleon!" said the girl, looking at the house. "Which way was he going?"

"Back toward New York from a visit to Poughkeepsie," said Adrian—"that way."

The girl followed the direction of his finger and looked down the elm-bordered street, arched over with early-Gothic twig-tracery. "It's absurd," she said to her companion with a grimace of the lips which looked French to Adrian. "Absurd, how I hear the beat of a horse's hoofs, unhurried and regular, down at the end of the road, and see a man's back, very broad, very straight . . . It's the first time I believed that George Washington ever really existed. From now on I too shall have more faith in our race."

"It needs all the faith it can get," commented Adrian. He added, "It's odd, your finding any interest in such a flat little historical incident, when you've been in France so much."

"My great-grandmother didn't live in France," said the girl. "Wasn't it nice that she didn't forget to make her courtesy?"

"Ah, you're real Rustdorf!" cried Adrian, laughing. He asked curiously, "Didn't your father or mother ever tell you any of these stories? How did you escape?"

"Oh, they weren't at all the kind of people who think of old-time stories. They were both very active, absorbed in the present. We were all of us very busy. Mother did tell us a few . . . I remember one about a grandmother of hers who used to tell that in 1817 as a child of five she walked alone to town to see the traveling waxworks. Mother said that she wore a new pair of green morocco shoes and a new . . ."

Adrian snatched the words from her mouth, "A new plaid linen dress, home-grown, home-spun, woven, dyed, and made. And at the waxworks she saw Captain Cook devoured by the cannibals, Pocahontas saving the life of John Smith, the Sleeping Beauty, and the Witch of Endor, raising—" He was rewarded by hearing her laugh out, loud and free, as she had in the house.

"You'll believe now perhaps that we are twigs on the same tree. I can cap any story you begin. Do you know the one about the children—our great-uncles, I daresay—who were picking up apples to eat and because it was a Sunday afternoon thought they were as wicked as the 'go up, baldhead' children, and set a little brother to watch for bears? Which ones did your father tell you?"

She shot a look at him from under her lashes and said, "The only thing he ever said about Rustdorf was that he wouldn't be caught dead in it for half an hour."

"How ever did it happen, I wonder," Adrian queried as he laughed, "that you suppressed that particular family reminiscence when you were answering Aunt Tryntje's questions? For a newcomer, you—"

She cut him short. "That's the queer thing. I don't feel like a newcomer. Less than ever in my life. It sounds foolish, literary, made up—but almost from the first I've felt as though I'd come back to a"—after a hesitation her voice changed so that Adrian felt as though she had moved closer to him as they walked—"to a place I'd always known, to people near to me. And that's strange. For I've never known any place very well. Nor people either. The only other people who seem to reach back into my past and sort of connect together the different parts of my life are a family of friends in Paris—but I remember, I told you about them in the house."

"I'm just back from Paris." Adrian brought this out abruptly, without having in the least intended to.

"You are?" said the girl, surprised. "Do you teach French, too?"

"No! heavens, no! You ought to hear me speak it. I was studying painting there." He had not meant to say this, either.

"Oh, you are an artist," said the girl.

"No, I'm not," he answered, "I found that out. That's why I came back."

What under the sun possessed him to do this? He had not said so much to any soul in Rustdorf! Good heavens! He had told it all, all there was to tell! He shrank with a raw soreness from any rejoinder she could possibly make, and began hastily to tell himself not to blame her for saying the wrong thing since he had put her in a position where there was no right thing to say. Walking thoughtfully by his side, the girl let his words sink into a long, healing silence. When Adrian finally glanced at her, he found she was looking at him—seeing him this time. Their eyes met.

He thought wildly, as he bent to open the gate in the hedge, "Why, she has magnificent eyes."

They had arrived. He pushed open the gate and led the way around to the back of the old house.

"I remember more than I thought!" said the visitor behind him. "I remember perfectly that side door in two parts. I was too little to unlatch the lower part, and when I got on a chair it seemed more fun to wriggle over and drop down outside. It's exactly like going back to the beginning of life and starting all over again!"

They turned the corner of the house and saw before them a slope of lawn, a few tall, leafless trees, the wide bare river in the distance. Several tulips stood like little painted flames beside the path.

"Oh!" cried the girl. *"Oh!"* She gave a little run, stopped, one hand at her temple in a startled attitude, and then moved slowly on.

Adrian thought it discreet to leave her to whatever memories of things past were set before her by the scene. He moved to one side and sat down on a bench. The little fox-terrier, who with his usual self-effacement had been trotting noiselessly at their heels, instead of following his mistress down the lawn, turned aside and jumped up beside him.

Adrian felt a shock of pleasure. He put his arm around the old fellow. It was extraordinary, he thought, what a liking he had taken at sight to that dog. The little lean warm body felt positively dear to him. And what an original, suitable name Sumner was! He looked down deep into the dog's eyes. They were all right, for a dog. But how limited and animal-like any dog's eyes are, compared to the awe-inspiring revelation of personality which human eyes can give!

The girl came back slowly along the path. She had taken off her gloves and now dropped them on the bench beside him. Adrian resisted with difficulty an impulse to pick up one of them and draw it through his fingers.

He looked down fixedly at the little soft huddle of gray suède, wondering if they were still warm from her hands. He tightened his clasp on the dog. The girl was standing close beside him, but he did not look up at her, having an obscure fear of what might happen if he did. He felt her stir. He heard her voice, crying out the thought that was knocking at his own heart, "Why, this is incredible! All of it!"

2

"Well, I don't know when I've seen a nicer girl," said Aunt Tryntje, as she poured the second cups of tea that evening. "They needn't tell me that all modern young people are mannerless and uncivilized. Those with Dutchess County blood, bring them up where you will and how you will, show their ancestry. I enjoyed every minute of this afternoon, after you two had gone back to the bank, when I had her to myself."

"Yes, I found her attractive," said the older Adrian.

"With a real family look, too," said Aunt Tryntje.

"Oh, yes, very much so. That breadth of low forehead, and the distance between her gray eyes. It gives them the honest look I always like."

"I *told* thee, Adrian, she had LeRoy eyes," triumphed Aunt Tryntje. "She mentioned having bad headaches. Now all the LeRoys have that trouble with headaches."

But Adrian knew by his father's voice that he had not been thinking of the LeRoys but of his daughter who had died, Adrian's little sister whom he could not remember, who would have been grown up now and might have helped to fill the place left by their mother.

"No, all is not vanity," thought Adrian, looking at his father.

"Adrian, when thee walked down to the station with her, did thee remember to tell her the story about Speck Zyn Kill?"

"No, Aunt Tryntje, I didn't. The conversation didn't seem to run naturally toward Speck."

"Did thee show her where the old landing-slip had been?"

"We went to look at the river while we waited for her train. I'm not sure I remembered to point out the old slip."

"Well, did thee at least tell her that Dutchess County was *always* freehold land—never any patroon foolishness?"

"No, it slipped my mind. Something else must have come up."

Adrian thought he was pronouncing these commonplace words in the most casual of tones. But he had a notion that his father pricked an ear. Now was the time, he thought, to slide into some other topic, to ask his father if he had remembered to speak to Dirck's father about the tennis.

So he asked, putting the question to them both, "What is that slight accent of hers? Did it sound French to you?"

"Accent?" said Aunt Tryntje in surprise. "What is thee talking about? She had no more accent than I. She spoke very nicely, I thought, not chewing and swallowing her words as young people do nowadays. I could hear every syllable."

"No, I don't think I noticed any accent," said his father judicially, after thinking a moment.

To himself Adrian said, "Now this is enough!" Aloud he asked, "Nice little dog of hers, wasn't he?"

Aunt Tryntje dissented again. "Now that was the only thing I didn't quite like about her. That dog. I thought she acted a little foolish about him. I don't like people who are foolish about their animals. It means a soft streak. In every other way she seemed such a sensible girl."

"I shouldn't say she had much of a soft streak," remarked the older Adrian in a noncommittal tone.

The meal was over. The two men pushed back their chairs and went into the living-room. Adrian's father sat down at once with the *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*.

"I'm safe," thought Adrian, getting out his pipe, "and just about time!" He planned to ask his father a question about the campaign for the mayoralty of Poughkeepsie, just then beginning. "Did you notice a sort of appealing quality about that Miss Gilbert?" he blurted out helplessly. His father lowered the newspaper and looked over it at Adrian. "Well, at least I'm too old to blush," thought Adrian in exasperation, keeping his eyes on his pipe.

"No, I didn't think she was at all appealing," said his father, after considering the matter. "I should have said that appealingness belonged to another generation of girls. She struck me as a singularly self-possessed young woman. Not unattractively so. I liked her. I liked the way she took the news of that bequest. Rather unusual in my experience. Yet that might have come from lack of vitality enough to care about it very much. She seemed rather a dry personality for anybody so young."

He waited a moment. Adrian made no audible comment, although in his heart he was crying out wrathfully, *"Dry!"* He was lost in consternation over the insensitive dullness of the older generation. The older Adrian lifted his newspaper and went on reading.

Adrian struck a match, lighted his pipe, and reached for the book nearest him. It was the old brown Montaigne which had cast a reflected light upon the suave low relief of that young cheek. He glanced from it—a natural sequence of memory—at the steel engraving on the wall before him, to which their visitor had raised her beautiful gray eyes. As he looked, George Washington's broad inexpressive face of putty became sensitive, young, looked back at him kindly. Had she really spoken those disheartened words? Or had he dreamed them? It seemed important to him that he should know, as if it would make a vital difference in his life. Well, Aunt Tryntje had been there. He could ask her.

He went through into the old kitchen where she was putting the dishes together in readiness for Rebecca, the colored woman who "came in mornings." But now, he who had been able to speak of nothing else could not bring out a single word.

Aunt Tryntje began to tell him eagerly, the fourth time he had heard it, about the recent discovery of five letters, mostly legible, received from Loyalists who had emigrated to Nova Scotia at the end of the Revolution. Aunt Tryntje thought such Loyalists unjustly neglected by Americans. These letters, she told Adrian, settled once for all the question of who had been second in command on that expedition.

"Good God, who cares?" thought Adrian indignantly. Aloud he said, "Thee must find such papers very interesting." He was anxious to keep Aunt Tryntje in a good temper.

He stood awkwardly, bored by the necessity of paying enough attention to those papers to answer Aunt Tryntje, irritably watching every motion of her hands, trying to think of some way to bring the talk where he would have it.

Aunt Tryntje said repeatedly, "There now, that'll do for tonight," in the pleasantly satisfied voice of housekeeping women when surveying something that comes up to their standards. And repeatedly darted at some last thing, "Just let me hang up this dishcloth!" or "Oh, I haven't put out the milk bottles."

They both finally went back into the living-room. Adrian had let his pipe go out. And he had not asked his question. Abruptly he said, "Aunt Tryntje, when thee asked Miss Gilbert if there was something she'd specially set her heart on, to do with Cousin Constance's money—"

"Yes—" prompted Aunt Tryntje.

"What did she answer?" The words were out, thundering as they came.

Aunt Tryntje considered, "Yes, I remember asking her that. What *did* she answer? Did she really answer at all?" She shook her head. "I don't believe I noticed. My eye lit on the clock just then, and I remembered I hadn't said anything to Rebecca about an extra person to lunch."

"Ah," said Adrian.

He took up the Montaigne again. Aunt Tryntje knitted peaceably. Presently she began to murmur in a low hum, as if thinking aloud, "Mmmm—funny—Jessica a nun—mmmmm—Van Benthuysen—Abby—Marietta—" her thoughts dropped below the level of audibility. They rose again with some emphasis to clearer speech as she answered herself with decision, "No, *ma'am!* Don't tell me! Jessica was no mystic. That Mother Superior—"

Adrian laid down his book to laugh. "Why not admit the possibility that she was converted to a more spiritual life?"

The old knitter looked up, startled. "Have I been talking to myself again! Mercy! How like Aunt Anna that is! I was just thinking over what Jessica's daughter told—" she stopped with a look of alarm and asked quickly, *"What did I say?"*

"Oh, various charitable speculations as to some sordid motive for Mrs. Gilbert's going into a sisterhood," replied Adrian.

She looked relieved. "Oh, that's all. I was trying to think if I'd ever known Jessica to show her Van Benthuysen blood. It was her grandmother, thee knows, who's recorded on the Reformed Church books as 'a member of this church but somewhat given to enthusiasms.' "

Adrian had heard this story so often that he ignored it now. "Doesn't it seem rather queer," he asked, "that her parents hadn't told her anything about Rustdorf, apparently hardly mentioned the name of the place? Come to think of it, I wonder why they didn't ever stop off, between trains, sometime. They must have passed through dozens of times."

"Oh, I don't know," said Aunt Tryntje casually, neutrally.

As she never spoke either casually or neutrally, Adrian wondered what she was keeping from him.

She added, "What does thee suppose Morris Gilbert would stop for, once Constance was dead and her money bequeathed?"

Adrian's father looked over the top of his newspaper.

"She was a person I used to find touching," he said.

"Adrian, how can thee say that? Thee never could abide Jessica," said his aunt.

"I didn't say I liked her. I found her touching. Didn't thee ever feel a sort of uneasiness about her? As if she were . . . yes, I know that pile-driver way she had of going after what she wanted, but in spite of that . . . really uncertain of the value of everything she did? Dependent on what other people thought of it, maybe? Yes, probably needed to feel backed up, approved of. The kind of woman who needs to be treated with great magnanimity if she's to develop any inner life of her own." He sighed, held up his paper, and remarked behind it, "But as far as that goes, who ever gets treated with magnanimity?"

After a few minutes he put down his paper again, asking himself with resigned self-contempt, "What *makes* me waste my time over newspapers?" "Aunt Tryntje," he went on, "what would thee think of inviting Jessica's daughter to make us a visit this summer? She seems pleasant, and it might do us good to have another young person around. Would it make much trouble?"

"Well, it might be nice. I could think about it. I suppose the room over the wing would do for summer."

"How about you, Adrian?" asked his father.

"Oh, I guess it would be all right," said Adrian, taking his pipe out of his mouth. "She said she plays tennis. I suppose we could get up some doubles." He put his pipe back into his mouth and went on looking at the page before him.

"Let me have a little time to approach Rebecca about it," said Aunt Tryntje.

"No hurry," said the older Adrian; "we're only in April now." He wandered toward the piano and turned over the music on it. "Will it bother thee if I try something here?" he asked.

"Not a bit, I love to hear thee pounding away," said Aunt Tryntje kindly.

He played stiffly, with middle-aged, not very expert fingers, but with (so Adrian often thought) a certain sense of what it was all about that made his occasional false notes and halting tempo not very important. Just now he was feeling his way through a Bach Invention that looked simpler on the page than it was. After that he played, making a much more presentable job of it, a graceful MacDowell "Woodland Sketch." At the end he shook his head, sighed, murmured, "Oh, what's the use!" and reached for his too difficult Bach again.

In the midst of this he said over his shoulder, "That Gilbert girl said she plays the piano, didn't she? I wonder how much it amounts to?"

"I didn't see any indications one way or the other," answered Adrian readily, with a competently executed casual accent. He was doing better, he thought, forgetting that he had not turned over a page since he had been holding the book.

His father swung around on the piano stool and sat there, his hands hanging between his knees. After a time Adrian glanced up at him and met his thoughtful eyes.

No, he was not too old to blush, he thought, feeling the slow heat burn its way to his temples. He looked back at the Montaigne, resolutely turned over a page, and suddenly thought, "Oh, perhaps Father is only thinking about whether I'm going to stay or not." The heat died out of his face.

"Well, I believe I'll go to bed," said Aunt Tryntje cheerfully, taking off her glasses and putting her knitting inside the little walnut sewing-cabinet which stood by her knee. "If you boys want anything to eat, there's gingerbread in the cake-box, and some applesauce in the blue bowl on the pantry shelf."

The tall clock ticked loudly in the silent room after she had gone. Adrian laid aside the Montaigne and looked expectantly and a little nervously at his father.

"What'd I do with my pipe, I wonder?" said the older man, getting up from the piano stool. After he had found it and lighted it the two men sat smoking meditatively. Adrian got himself more in hand. When his father spoke he was ready to answer him as quietly as the question was put.

"Well, Adrian, how about it . . . have you had time to think what comes next? I'm ready for anything you decide."

"I believe I'll stay right on here," said Adrian. "I've had my try—a fair chance at what I wanted. It's no go." With the words something that till then had gone on hoping for life gave up its wistful ghost and lay dead at Adrian's feet. He was somewhat shaken, having thought it dead before, but he averted his eyes and went on in a matter-of-fact tone, "Better be a good savings-bank cashier than a mediocre artist."

Within his father's heart rose a cry of desperate sympathy, of passionate unresignation, of reckless uncounting devotion—he ached with longing to spend his all, his life that was no longer of any use to him, so that his boy should have what he wanted.

He drew a long, deep, painful breath and came back from this madness to a wonder that at his age he should still think there was any way one human being could give another what he wanted. What had the boy said with that manly finality, that had clicked like the locking of a door, and yet with a quiver in his voice which his father recognized from his little-boy days . . . "better a good bank cashier than a mediocre artist."

"There's more in that, Adrian, than you probably believe now," said his father gently.

"Oh, I believe it, all right," rejoined Adrian steadily, tamping down the tobacco in his pipe with his forefinger. He could not have told what his father had said, or what he had answered, except that the very sound of his father's voice had been irritating to him. He struggled hard to keep out of sight this aftermath of an emotional crisis.

His father waited humbly to see if Adrian felt like adding anything to his statement, like letting his father share in what had brought him to his decision. Adrian very decidedly did not feel like letting any one share in the consciousness of failure which had preceded that decision. His bald statement of it had been just all that he could manage, and he now sat in a moody silence, listening to its reverberations down his future.

His father heard them too, apparently, for after a long pause he remarked moderately, "Well, there are worse things than living in Rustdorf. At least for men of our temperament. I don't want to talk like Aunt Tryntje, but there is a good deal of quiet blood in us. It's the fashion nowadays to maintain that a man can't be sure whether he's alive unless there are guns going off around him, and some weaker person to knock down once in a while, and a new woman every week or so."

He had hoped he might win Adrian to a smile, but there was no lightening in the other's somber face, so he went prosaically on, "But as a matter of unobserved fact, there are several other varieties of men, and we Friends usually belong to one of the variants. At least I do."

Adrian said impatiently, "Oh, Lord, yes," as though this were not the matter in question.

His father went on thoughtfully, feeling his way forward among his words as he had among the Bach notes. "After all, I suppose you get harmony and equilibrium in life as in everything else by keeping what you have in proportion, more than by having such a lot. And harmony and equilibrium are maybe what last you best, in the long run."

He was aware from the suppressed exasperation on Adrian's tightened lips that he was sounding like Polonius. What made parents always go through this futile business of trying to pass on to the young the incommunicable fruits of experience?

"I know what you mean," Adrian said, evidently thinking of something else.

With an unheard sigh his father turned the subject around to another angle. "The fact is, I dare say," he remarked, "that at the very moment I am talking about the reasonableness of our family stock I am probably expressing an unbridled primitive passion. Well, if you ever have one son and lose his mother and live without her for many years, and without him all the time of his education . . . perhaps you'll not be able to stifle any better than I can a whoop of selfish relief when he decides to stay near you."

Adrian both heard and understood this. His face softened. He looked over warmly at his father and said from his heart, "You certainly know how to give the prodigal a rousing welcome home."

He was ashamed of his morose impatience and very glad that he had not let his father guess at it.

"What do you say we try some gingerbread?" suggested his father, rising.

In the low-ceilinged, brown-beamed, whitewashed kitchen, over the spoils of pantry and ice-box, they talked business. In the intervals of his own college work and in a period before going abroad, Adrian had been junior clerk and assistant bookkeeper, so that he was quite familiar with the routine of its management.

"The trustees have always taken for granted you'd come back," said the older Adrian, sipping his milk; "so it'll be perfectly all right with them. Of course it's no 'opening' at all in the modern sense, and never will be. The beginning salary is microscopic, but you know the ropes so well it won't be long before you'll have it all in hand. I'll soon be glad enough to step back to second place. I'm almost at the age now when my father did. Not that there's much money to be made, at best, in a savings bank. But it's always been rather a satisfaction to me, and perhaps it will be in the long run to you, that nobody makes any profit out of our kind of a bank, only salaries. To be in a business that doesn't make profits for anybody, only just decent wages for work done, I've found it tranquilizing. It keeps out of your life—your own personal life, that is—the uneasiness about the real source of profits. You can be dead sure that you have not, without meaning to, put your hand into somebody else's pocket."

Adrian was as used to this notion of his father's as to Aunt Tryntje's ancestor-worship and made no comment on it. "I don't mind the small pay," he said. "What would I do with money in Rustdorf? Enough to buy tennis balls and give Aunt Tryntje my board-money, that's about all I could use."

"You might marry," said the older man, tipping back his kitchen chair; "people do, sometimes."

Adrian laughed, "Well, yes, I suppose there really isn't anything impossible about it." He leaned across the table and broke off a piece of gingerbread.

His father said nothing for a moment, balancing on his chair, one sinewy, delicate, elderly hand holding to the edge of the table. Then, "I hope you will, Adrian, if you find the right mate."

He brought all four legs of his chair accurately and noiselessly to the floor and went on speaking very naturally and looking directly at Adrian so that all of his personality spoke as well as his words. "There's a great deal said about love," he remarked, "some realistic brutal things, some sentimental and sugary . . . some acid and corrosive. And I suppose that every word that's been said, each way, is true enough. As far as it goes. But nothing to the purpose. Young people ought to be told that nobody has ever been able—not even Dante—to find a way to say what it really is, true love. All that's said about it . . . well, it's like Plato's cave-shadows, compared to life in the sunshine. If you are fortunate in your love."

Adrian said nothing, feeling rather awed and, used as he was to his father's natural way of speaking out whatever was in his mind, extremely embarrassed.

"'As in old time . . .'" quoted his father—

"'As in old time, a head with gentle grace,
All tenderly laid by thine
Taught thee the nearness of the love divine . . .'"

With an exquisite piercing stab to the heart Adrian thought of Matey's head laid tenderly by his. . . .

"Well, it does. Just that," said Adrian the older, getting up to put the milk away in the ice-box. "I hope you'll have your share, Adrian," he said, over his shoulder.

He shut the ice-box door quietly and sat down, leaning an elbow on the table, resting his gray head on one hand and looking at the floor. Adrian tipped back in his chair and stared up thoughtfully at the rough brown of the uncovered beams. His father's words filled the room to the brim.

Presently it seemed to Adrian that what filled the plain old room overflowed into the world beyond.

"Nobody'd need a label on us to know us for Friends," said his father finally, raising his head. "We've sat here holding meeting all by ourselves as if we were a couple of old elders. It's past bedtime. Adrian, wind the clock, will thee? Thee's taller than I."

3

PRISCILLA was in Italy, chaperoning a party of American girls, when she received Matey's letter saying she was engaged to marry Adrian Fort. The party was just about to start home (it was toward the end of August) so that there was no time for more than the noncommittal "love and best wishes" which Priscilla sent off from Naples. But when she landed in New York, as soon as her spoiled and petulant charges had been restored to the not-too-enthusiastic arms of their well-to-do families, she telegraphed and took the first train north.

Matey had an idea that Priscilla's feelings were not very fully or accurately represented by the "love and best wishes" cablegram. But she felt none of her old apprehensions about making her sister understand. The new joy in her life had brought with it a clear sense of freedom from old bonds. "No, dear, you'd better not come with me to meet Priscilla's train," she told Adrian. "She'll want to see me first alone. The walk up from the station will give us a chance for a good talk." It would not take her any longer than that, she was sure, to make Priscilla understand.

She was overjoyed that her sister was coming. With Adrian, Matey faced the future. She liked this. It was not merely her old sense of decent family loyalty that kept her from trying to paint her past for him, nor her certainty that it could never be made visible to any one who had not lived through it on the inside. Adrian's ignorance of her past was part of her escape from it. But Priscilla *had* lived through it on the inside. She could understand, as Adrian never could, what the present meant. Matey could hardly wait for the arrival of her train.

The small station was dozing in the sun when she reached it, rather ahead of time. Not a soul was to be seen. She sat down on an empty baggage truck. Before her, the Hudson silently spread its late-afternoon sheet of gold. Sumner jumped up beside her. From a string of barges drifting down the river came the distant creaking of a pump.

Matey's lips began to move. She was talking to Priscilla. She was at last pouring out her heart intimately and naturally to her much-loved sister. Adrian had allowed no wall to grow up between him and his sweetheart. This meant, Matey felt it instinctively, that the wall between her and Priscilla—their helpless inability never to speak seriously of what they deeply felt—was down too.

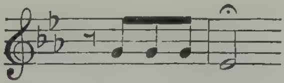
First of all the fruits of this long-awaited freedom to talk to Priscilla, she meant to share with her that last hour of their father's life, of which she had never yet been able to speak. And after she had told her, simply, what it had been, she would go on, "Priscilla, you'll think perhaps that it might have been only a meaningless reflex—like those of drowning people. But if you'd heard, if you'd seen them, you'd never think that for an instant. I don't pretend to know all that it meant—for them. But for me, from that minute on, it has meant that there was ever so much more between Father and Mother than you and I saw—than little girls *can* see. They belonged to each other, and knew it, in some way we never guessed. It changed everything for me. I used to think, you know, that there wasn't any use trying to find the right path because there wasn't any that led anywhere. Ever since that night I've thought maybe you and I had just made a wrong turning and got lost. Yes, that's just how I felt—lost, and waiting for some one who knew the way to find me and take me home. And Adrian's the one who's come. Is that what women mean when they say they've 'fallen in love with a man'? I don't know.

"When I saw he was falling in love with me, I meant to slip away out of reach as you and I have always done. But I *liked* him! And I didn't slip away soon enough. And now I'm so glad! One evening I was sitting on a rock overlooking the Hudson. He was lying on the grass close to my knee. We'd stopped talking, and I knew what he was thinking. I made up my mind that before he could say a word I'd tell him I was going away to make another visit the next day. But he didn't say a word. He just looked up at me—Priscilla! I can't wish you ever any greater happiness than to have some one look at you so! *Tenderly,* Priscilla, as if he loved me, not just as if he wanted me. And I suppose I must have shown in my face—oh, more than I knew. . . ."

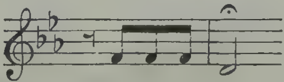
She imagined her sister there more and more vividly, and felt how she would throw her arms around her as she went on, "Priscilla, it's the first happiness we've either of us ever had."

In the acquiescent silence about her, she went on to imagine what Priscilla would ask, and answered her in the invincibly fluent language of thought, "No, I don't always feel as sure as that time. It often doesn't seem real. And I have scared times about it too, as I did when I was a little girl, do you remember? One night I had a nightmare that scared me terribly. I dreamed I was back in it all—you know, Priscilla, that foreboding, that helplessness. It was at breakfast—after a party, *you* remember!—the smooth-sounding talk with that will-to-hurt fumbling its way along under it. I was trying to eat my oatmeal—Priscilla, you remember how breakfast used to taste? I was so terrified I could hardly breathe, for this time the stab inside the talk was trying to find *me.* Half of me was saying, my teeth chattering, 'But I'm not tied there yet. I can get up this minute and dress and take a night train away, and never—' But I couldn't stir a finger.

"And then I woke up and heard the night boat hooting, as they often do, and a train whistling back . . . night cries that filled all the darkness for a moment. And, Priscilla—I suppose I wasn't really awake yet—as plainly as I ever heard anything, the night boat shouted out



and the train called back strongly



And I remembered that the day before Adrian and I had measured our height, and he hadn't minded a bit—not at all, not in the *least,* Priscilla!—that I am a little taller than he. The nightmare faded out to nothing. I lay down in bed and went right to sleep as I used to when I'd been out playing hide-and-seek."

Her imaginary talk ran on faster and faster. "Yet I'm not always sure that I am in love with Adrian or want to be married to him. How can I be sure when in spite of all I've read, I honestly don't know just what that means, and I've always been ashamed to ask or try to find out? To get married is stepping off into something unknown, I see that. But if I go with Adrian! . . . I *like* him so much. I like to have him near me. You know how you and I have always hated to be touched. Well, the first thing I noticed that was different was how I loved to have his hand brush against mine as we walked side by side. I like his hands. I like the back of his neck . . . isn't it silly . . . and the first time he put his arms around me I felt as though we were just one person. Do you suppose that is 'being in love with a man,' Priscilla?"

In the distance, down the river, the train whistled. The sound startled Matey. She had forgotten that these confidences were not being really made, that Priscilla was not there yet. Tears were standing in her eyes, so sweet had been this foretaste of intimacy.

She wiped them away to catch the first sight of the train which was bringing to her Priscilla, the real Priscilla, not the imaginary one with whom she had been happily talking.

She saw the train, distant, dark, hugging the curving tracks with a worm-like twisting, darting fast toward her, a spiteful jet of steam standing at its forehead. Priscilla was on that train, coming to find out how in the world her little sister could have lost her head.

It loomed closer. Roaring and grinding its brakes, it drew up at the station. Matey looked around for Sumner and snatched him up. Holding him in her arms, she ran along the platform. A friend of Aunt Tryntje's climbed slowly down, looking very Rustdorf in her old-ladyish ignoring of prevailing styles in hats and hair; a shabby tired mother with a couple of sticky-faced children; some gum-chewing girls. . . .

And then Priscilla—tall, blonde, tailored, her face masked in the set impassivity of the well-bred Nordic traveler. At the familiar sight, Matey's past surged up from the remoteness to which Adrian had pushed it. The very odor of the sachet Priscilla always used, the very feel of her firm smooth cheek as they embraced, brought back to Matey all their other meetings. Their past loomed darkly between them.

Of course there was naturally the matter of the baggage. The leisurely elderly expressman who had now emerged from the station was, after the usual Rustdorf habit, Adrian's second cousin. He had to be approached therefore with even an increase of the humane Dutchess County tradition that business is a part of the never-ending flow of life and not part of a mechanism to be snapped briskly open or shut: "So this is your sister?" said he to Matey. To Priscilla, kindly, "Glad to see you back in the old town. I used to know your mother well. She certainly was a whipstitch! You girls will have to step fast to keep up to her." Remembering that there was a question of baggage, he guessed maybe he could deliver that trunk today. Or tomorrow morning. . . .

But there was Priscilla's suitcase. Looking into each other's eyes, and reading there life-and-death decisions to be taken, they tried nervously to decide how to get Priscilla's suitcase to the house. Should they try to carry it—or send it?

"It's not very heavy."

"Let me take it."

"Oh, no, Matey dear, I couldn't let you *carry* it. No porters?" (asked the girl fresh from Naples).

"Gracious! No!" (In spite of her nervous tension the girl who had been spending the summer in Rustdorf was overtaken by a sudden laugh.) "Perhaps we could send it up with the trunk?"

"But, Matey, it has my night things in it. I'd need it tonight."

More talk with the expressman. One by one the sparkling bubbles of reunion's new wine broke and fell flat. Yes, he guessed he could bring them things up this afternoon if there was so much hurry for them. Matey knew very well he had nothing else to do.

"Oh, thank you so very much, Mr. Van Bommel."

All this in their company voices.

At last they started, the two sisters, up the elm-shaded street. And Matey was not the one who roused herself to act on a resolution made beforehand. It was Priscilla who, as they turned away from the station, burst out, "See here, Matey, *I* don't think you ought to . . . You know . . . you know . . . I'd always taken for granted you and I would never marry. It's not . . . It frightened me *terribly* to . . ." She threw her arm about her sister and pressed it hard against her shoulders.

Her words were too faltering to be intelligible. But Matey knew what she meant and would not say. It was moving to have Priscilla thus helplessly shaking the door she had locked long ago. Matey was startled into a reflected agitation by the strange sight of Priscilla agitated and not trying to hide it. "Now I mustn't let Priscilla stampede me," she thought, trying to call back the confidence she had felt while waiting for the train. But in her imaginary conversation she had made no preparation for a Priscilla trying hard to say something of her own. She tried to bring Adrian's face before her eyes, and found that in this absurd momentary confusion she could not at once seem to remember exactly how he looked. "What is the matter with me!" she thought fiercely. "I will not let this go on another instant. I will answer Priscilla *some*thing before I draw another breath." She heard her own voice saying with incredible flatness, "It's all right Priscilla. Adrian's really awfully nice. And so is his father." What had made her mention fathers to Priscilla!

Anything but reassured, Priscilla gave her sister a panicstruck look. "But, Matey . . . suppose it's *not* all right," she said in a trembling voice. "You *can't* know. . . . Remember how everybody used to think . . ."

Matey knew now that if she tried to answer her voice would be worse than flat, that it would tremble like Priscilla's, for she was startled into a bodily tremor she could not control. Priscilla had not said out her thought, but she had pushed it into Matey's mind none the less. Priscilla meant that they had both been at least safe, that they had learned how to cower down so low that the roaring wind of evil passed over their heads. She was trying to find words to cry out on the madness that had induced Matey to risk all, to stand up, to take a step forward in that trackless dark.

If the younger sister turned pale and shook under this onslaught, it was partly with dismay at herself. She was silent, struggling impatiently as with a nervous seizure.

Priscilla saw nothing but her pallor and said urgently, "Matey, you could easily get a position in the school where I am. Or I could go to teach in Cleveland near you, if you are lonely. I ought to have done this before. We could keep house together. . . ." A dreadfulness of raw feeling throbbed in her voice. It overshot the mark. It put, quite unexpectedly, the right weapon for resistance into Matey's hands. For the first time in her life Priscilla did not seem an older, more complete person. With astonishment Matey perceived that her older sister sounded like a child, as though she did not understand at all. Really it was not very intelligent of Priscilla not to have learned more than one thing out of life. "After all," thought the younger sister, half impatiently, half pityingly, "after all there may be something in the world besides our lost forty cents." She almost said it aloud. But Priscilla had never heard what that story meant to Matey. And she never laughed herself out of overwrought ideas. How odd it seemed that it should be Matey who was trying to think of some way to quiet and reassure Priscilla!

She laid her hand on Priscilla's arm, she made her stand still on the sidewalk, she tried to penetrate into Priscilla's real self as she said firmly, "Now, Priscilla, listen to me. *It's all right!*"

But no, her thrust went through into vacancy. Priscilla's eyes shifted, looked self-conscious, looked away. Priscilla gave the little meaningless, nervous laugh which was her parry against any stroke that threatened to come too close. Priscilla could not—would not understand.

Adrian came running down the street toward them now, Adrian dressed for the important occasion in white flannels. In spite of them he did not look very stylish, only fresh and clean. Adrian never would look very stylish, Matey knew that by this time. He looked a little nervous too at passing the inspection of the first of Matey's family and at seeing Priscilla so formidably elegant and worldly-looking. But more than anything else he looked, compared to Priscilla, grown up and complete, with his nice hazel eyes and his smile—Adrian's smile—lifting his sandy-red mustache as he halted before them, shook Priscilla's hand, and said he was glad to see her. "I was supposed to wait for you at the house," he explained cheerfully, "but when I saw you both actually coming along . . . well, here I am, somehow."

At the sound of his voice, with its inimitable naturalness, at the perfectly Adrian-like unarranged and unpicturesque words with which he first addressed his sister-to-be, Matey shook off the last reflection from Priscilla's hysteria and stepped out from the past. "He just *hasn't* any company voice," she thought fondly.

"He simply couldn't plan for an effect or keep his mind on what impression he is making." It seemed to her enough of a reason, even though scarcely the traditional one, for marrying him. It was one Priscilla might understand, if she could only tell her. Or perhaps Priscilla might see it for herself.

By the end of Priscilla's stay Matey did not know whether she had seen this or anything else. And yet Priscilla had beaten Adrian at tennis once or twice and had seen for herself that he did not hate her then or sulk afterward. Priscilla *must* have noticed that. But Matey could only guess. She knew no more than ever what was going on in Priscilla's mind, if indeed Priscilla allowed much of anything to go on in it.

She regretted more bitterly than ever that she had not been able, long ago, to speak to Priscilla of the ending of their father's life. She still did not at all understand that never-forgotten hour. The recollection of it always tossed her helplessly back and forth between two impressions of it—if that had been love, and if love could do no more than that for human lives! And yet—a belonging together that outlived all else, and stood up boldly in the face of death—!

Whatever it had been, it was Priscilla's as well as hers. Why hadn't she ever been able to say the few words that would have told it?—"Priscilla, as Father lay dying, he was frightened, horribly frightened, and it was Mother he called to in his fright. And it was Mother who answered—Mother!—in a voice of such steadfast love; Mother who helped him through the dreadfulness of dying!" Why hadn't she said it like that? Time after time she had determined that she would. But always as she drew her breath for the first words, her heart began to beat thickly with the fear that if she spoke now her voice would sound self-conscious, unnatural, false. What *was* this paralysis of throat and eye which overtook them at the thought of saying simply and naturally what was in their hearts?

One evening after Priscilla had gone, when she and Adrian were taking a twilight walk together, she put this question to him. She did not explain what it was she wished to say to Priscilla, but put it as part of her general wonder at the ways of human beings. Adrian answered that his guess was that the language of saying simply and naturally what was in your heart was probably at least as difficult to learn as French or German and took as much practice.

"Father's a proficient in that language," he told her. "Perhaps it's his Quakerism . . . lifelong habit of not saying anything unless he means it. Perhaps because he always manages so there is little he needs to conceal. He can actually, if it happens to come into his head in a quiet hour, talk to you about his feeling the immanence of God as naturally as he asks you whether the front door is locked. Once, I remember, last spring—I think now he had seen I'd already fallen in love with you—he said something to me about love and its greatness. . . . Did you suppose there was a father living who could bring himself to mention such a subject to his son?"

Matey was astonished. "I'm twenty-four years old and I've known lots and lots of people and I never, never heard a single living human being intimate openly that love could be great." She added, "What did he say?"

"Ah, I wouldn't dare try to repeat it to you. My voice would sound like a preacher's, and that's the last awfulness for a Friend, you know. I can show you—" he snatched her to him—"but I can't tell you. Not yet. But I'm going to lose no time in practicing that language. You too, Matey darling!"

"I don't know a word of it," said Matey.

"Well, practice a little, now," he urged. "What comes into your mind first of all when you remember we are going to be married?"

Matey looked at him piteously, but said bravely, "I'll tell the truth . . . a sense of complete unreality."

Adrian had not expected this, but after a pause for taking breath he asked, "How do you mean, unreality? That I don't exist? Or that we aren't engaged? Or *what*?"

He put his arm about her as he spoke; they were strolling along the lane which led to the river, a favorite evening walk of theirs. Matey leaned against him. Physical nearness to him helped her feel and think more clearly. She listened to what was in her mind for a moment and answered. "Everything seems unreal—myself too. Only not you, when I'm close enough to feel you. The old Matey's gone . . . or is she just waiting there in Cleveland for the autumn teaching to begin? And I don't know the new one. Is there a new one? It seems like something in a dream. Perhaps it hasn't had time to reach me yet." She turned her face to his, in the twilight. "You know, Adrian, I didn't mean at all to kiss you back that time. From the moment we sat down on the grass I was all ready—I even had the words picked out—

to tell you that I wasn't the marrying kind, and that I was going to go away from Rustdorf the next morning anyhow. I was saying that over and over to myself to keep it clear . . . and then you just looked up at me, and I forgot it all."

"Were you glad you were planning to say that?" asked Adrian.

Matey turned her head from one side to the other a little wildly. "Oh, Adrian, I can't tell you whether I was or not. I don't know. I can't tell you how strange it seems. Priscilla may be right. Perhaps I oughtn't to marry." (But she did not tell him why. She never told him why.) "I don't understand anything about it. Whatever *made* me, when you only looked up at me so, begin to cry and kiss you back with all my heart? I didn't mean to!"

"Perhaps you love me, Matey?" suggested Adrian gently, drawing her closer to him.

"Do you suppose I do?" said Matey, half sobbing, half laughing, clinging to him, rubbing her cheek back and forth on his. "When I'm *with* you, I seem to, don't I? Especially when you put your arms around me. But I thought . . . I thought I couldn't love anybody . . . except Sumner!" she ended absurdly. "You're like Sumner anyhow," she told him, laughing uncertainly; "you want me to tell you the truth. Well, I thought from the very first you were like Sumner. Your eyes are like his. You don't need to tell me I'm being silly. I know it."

"Oh, I don't mind having Sumner as a predecessor," said Adrian; "you probably learned a lot on him. As a matter of fact we are alike. We're both alike. We both love you. And we let you know it."

"Do you suppose," Matey asked him, "that I love you enough to marry you when I can't even really believe we are engaged?"

"Well, let's try it anyhow," suggested Adrian.

They had come out now on the rocks high above the Hudson, and saw what they had come to look at. A miracle bloomed there with every lamp-lighting time. The wide stream was as dim in the twilight as the River of Death. On the opposite bank stood a settlement which in the daytime was only a cluster of mean wooden houses. Punctually, night by night, as darkness fell, there shone out in its place the golden sisterhood of stars at which the lovers now gazed silently.

Francis made a visit to Rustdorf too, stopping off between trains on his way to New York. He was handsomer than ever, and better dressed, and more masculinely magnetic. The aroma of power scented any room where he sat, as definitely as the perfume of his very upper-class cigars.

He told Matey that he had come to see her fiancé, and to tell her that she was not the only pebble on the beach, that he was engaged to be married himself. Her name, he said, was Emily McAdams, her father was a senior partner of the law firm where he was employed; he showed her photograph, so much retouched that Matey had little impression of more than the requisite number of features; he said she was rather darker than blonde, was a graduate of Miss Spence's School, a débutante of that year, liked to wear blue a good deal, was not the athletic sporty type, but rather old-fashioned and domestic—told, in short, every imaginable detail but the one of which Matey had been instantly sure from the announcing of his news.

Francis had been engaged before (this was one of the things she had not told Aunt Tryntje) to a girl with prospects. But when the grandmother had died, it was found that her fortune had been left to the Presbyterian Church instead of to the younger generation. And not long after that, the health of Francis' fiancée had declined so that her doctor, in spite of Francis' pleadings, had absolutely forbidden her to think of marrying. In announcing his present engagement he spoke about this earlier disappointment not only to Matey but to the Forts, with dignity, in the touching manner of one who finds that after all, life has unsuspected reserves. Not that anything could be like one's first love, but perhaps something might be better, deeper and quieter.

Matey made no comment. She leaned back in her chair absent-mindedly stroking Sumner while Francis talked about his future. She had no more to say when he talked about their common past, for, finding that both their father and mother were known in Rustdorf, he fell naturally into reminiscences, painting a vivid picture, true to the last detail, of the various homes they had had, the stirring social life in which their family had always been a leader. "Do you remember, Matey, those dinner parties in Hamilton? By George, Mr. Fort, I go out a good deal in Pittsburgh, but I never heard better talk anywhere than that I heard at my parents' table. Living in a university circle, you know, one has the pick of people who know their stuff. And Father and Mother knew how to bring them out. Yes, they made an ideal home atmosphere for us. When I hear other fellows talking about family life—lots of the Pittsburgh boys have parents who were divorced—I realize more than ever how fortunate we children were in seeing such an example of team-work before us. Father and Mother were literally never separated for more than a day or so. They were crazy about each other."

The Forts heard more, they said, about Matey's family in the one day that Francis was there than in all the week Priscilla stayed with them. For that matter, more than Matey had ever told them. "Oh, Matey's a regular clam," said Francis, with a friendly laugh. "She was a chatterbox as a kid. I remember she used to talk your head off. But as she grew up—Mother used to say it seemed as though Matey's music took the place of words. Her music and her darned little dog. You may have noticed that Matey's only confidant is Sumner. 'Too much dog in her cosmos,' Father always said." He ruffled the old dog's ears playfully as he spoke.

He seemed to make his usual brilliantly favorable impression on the Rustdorf people. Adrian's father greeted him kindly, listened to him attentively, and Aunt Tryntje was quite carried away by his interest in Dutchess County history and his desire to learn the details of his ancestry. "I never saw a more delightful young man," she told Matey a good many times after Francis had gone away—"so *appreciative!* When I told him what Mr. Winthrop said about the Friends in Rustdorf, 'a community of transparent souls where no man hides his motive,' he said he had never heard a finer phrase."

It seemed very familiar to Matey not to have any idea what to answer back. She could not very well report Francis' talk with her at the station as he went away: "Matey, for heaven's sake, pull out of this hole! You'll suffocate, used as you are to the intelligent university crowd. You probably take that sort of thing for granted. But you just try living in an American small town, cutting yourself off from civilization, and you'll . . . I tell you I know, just after this one day here, what Father meant when he used to say he wouldn't be caught dead in . . ."

"I remember what Father used to say," Matey cut him short.

"Well, bear it in mind! The old aunt is enough to addle your brains. And that prosy pious old banker . . . ! God! The whole place fairly reeks with stagnation. Honestly, Matey, you're crazy!"

Struck with a new possibility, he interrupted himself to say hastily, "See here, you're not making a mistake about this banking business, are you? Do you even know the difference between a real bank and a mutual savings bank? It's not a *bank* at all in the business sense—there's no more chance for profits in it than in one of these nigger mutual burying associations. It's about the same thing . . . sort of charity. Honestly it is, like something a university settlement might run. Yes, *you might about as well be planning to marry a settlement worker.*"

This was the only direct reference he made to his sister's fiancé. She needed nothing more explicit. She had read in his first glance at Adrian the conviction that he was a dead loss who never would get anywhere.

"Why, Matey, the expressman here at the station is the old man's first cousin. And another of your relatives-to-be, so I gather, that ancient crone who runs a bakeshop in one corner of her house. Honestly! Matey. . . !"

Matey felt her cheeks hot with resentment, and to her shame, with discomfort. She spoke angrily to hide her flinching. "Francis, don't be ridiculous, everybody in America has relatives like that! Those very ones are ours too, you know."

"Why pick out the one spot where such ones live?" inquired Francis.

"Another of Mr. Fort's cousins is Chief Justice of the Iowa Supreme Court," advanced Matey, hating every word she was saying.

"But you're not going to live in Des Moines," said Francis, with a devastating effect of finality.

His words almost gave Matey the clew to something clear and final to be said on the other side, something she had dimly felt from her first hour in Rustdorf. But with Francis' scornful eye on her, she could not get her wits together enough to grasp it. She had, after all, no defense but her old one of being ashamed of being ashamed.

Francis was too much for her, as usual. As long as he stood there she could not save herself from the abjectness of seeing Adrian, his father, Rustdorf, as Francis did. She was horrified to feel under her brother's blighting survey that she was ashamed of Adrian's lack of an air, of his future, of the very things in him and in his father which she loved. But her experience of Francis rose up admonishingly. She could at least look stubborn and close her lips with an offended air, as if she were a sulky child. Francis readily identified her expression as a familiar one. Hadn't she . . . his memory groped among old trifles . . . hadn't she as a little girl looked like this one day when she had spoiled a game for a whole crowd by being unreasonable?

He said in a brotherly tone, "I'm just giving you the best advice I can, Matey. Get mad about it if you like, but don't forget it." And then, on an impulse, laying a comradely hand on her shoulder, "See here, Matey old girl, why don't you come to Pittsburgh to teach? In the university there. I could get you a job, I know. And I'm getting on, *fast*. More than I've let on to you and Priscilla, because I don't like to brag. I've got a mighty fine circle of friends around me and I'd be *glad* to introduce you to them, and let you have the entrée wherever I have. It's to whatever's worth while in the city, if I do say so." His imagination caught fire. "Why, yes, Matey, why haven't I thought of this before? You'd meet scads of the nicest sort of young fellows . . . sons of the steel magnates . . . every one of them," he said with an emphasis that pointed a contemptuous finger at Adrian, "with a big future before him, going somewhere and going *fast!* Emily would be awfully good to anybody I backed up, you can bank on that. So would all her family. I don't mind telling you, just to give you an idea—that I pulled her father out of a hole the old man won't forget in one while. And kept still about it afterward. *He'd* see to it that you got every . . ."

From the beginning of this proposal Matey had felt a mounting wave of vivid feeling on which she could not put a label. Did she wish to stamp her foot and slap Francis? Or to burst into bitter tears? Neither, apparently, for she now began helplessly to laugh. Francis was simply too Francis-like for anything!

"What are you laughing at?" asked Francis in amazement.

"Never mind what," said Matey.

"It's no laughing matter," said Francis, nettled. "You've got to stop these childish ways of yours, Matey, and face *facts*. What you decide now decides all your future life. If Father were alive, you know how he . . ."

Matey stopped laughing and looked again, so Francis thought, stubborn and dumb. He liked this better than her laughter, divining in it a resistance less formidable. If he only had time . . . but his train was coming in. He had done his best to take his father's place and put a stop to Matey's madness; he had pulled all the strings there were to head off this foolishness, both with Matey and with her young man. He had given them each something to think over. His appointment in New York was an important one. After all, Matey was not planning to be married until next June. There was plenty of time.

He stooped to kiss his sister good-by, and said, urgently, affectionately, "Now, Matey, don't make a fool of yourself! Come on to Pittsburgh and join me. I'd stand by. We'd go far! Honest we would!"

"Now here is a test," thought Matey to herself as, rather shaken in nerves, she walked slowly home under the elms. "Shall I have the courage to tell Adrian that for a long wretched moment I was ashamed of him?"

She felt a sincere misery over what, after a summer of Aunt Tryntje's idiom, she called to herself "the Gilbert blood coming out." But she found she could not bring it to the light, even to Adrian—not even to be worthy of the effort it cost him that evening to tell her something which he evidently would have preferred to conceal.

She had felt him stirred and preoccupied at the supper-table, usually so peaceful, and when they went out on the porch, noticed that he did not sit down on the swinging hammock beside her. "What makes you sit off there on that straight uncomfortable chair?" she asked him as honestly as a child.

He was silent, and then, "Matey, I'm the one who's always talking about never hiding anything from each other—I suppose you might as well know now as later, that I doubt . . . I doubt . . . if your brother and I will ever be exactly what anybody could call intimate friends."

Matey was genuinely astonished that there should be anybody who, meeting Francis for the first time, did not like him. "What ever happened!" she asked.

Adrian said quickly, "That's what I don't want to tell you—yes, I know, that's not consistent. Well, I will tell you. He—he tried to—" No, decidedly he could not say it.

Matey thought she knew. "He tried to make you think that I'd find Rustdorf too—" But Adrian's look at her through the dusk showed her it had not been that. "What *did* he say?" she asked.

Adrian hesitated. "He said he thought as the only man of your family, he ought to warn me—to tell me that you—" He stopped, really at a loss. Finally he murmured, "—that you haven't very much of what the French call *tempérament.*"

For all that Matey understood he might as well not have made any effort to speak out. She had often heard this word, but among the many things which at twenty-four she did not know was what exactly it meant. Her impression, which had seemed to suit any context in which she had as yet met it, was that a person with *tempérament* fell in love easily and often. Mme. Vinet had once said impatiently of a cook with many suitors that she had so much *tempérament* it was useless to expect her to get three meals a day. Well, if Francis had told Adrian that she did not fall in love easily or often, he was right. Why should Adrian object to that?

"Well—?" she asked.

Adrian said furiously, "I lost my temper. I told him perhaps his taste and mine in that matter might not—I told him it was none of his business. I told him to go to hell."

Matey had never seen Adrian angry. She was too startled to speak.

From the open door the elder Adrian's voice asked, "Matey, how about Number Seven? Could you give an old bore one more . . ."

"If you only knew!" said Matey, rising quickly, "how many lonesome hours I've spent playing Bach to myself because nobody would listen!"

"I'll sit out here and hold Sumner's hand," said Adrian. "We understand each other, Sumner and I."

In the middle of the Bach, Matey stopped playing. She swung around on the piano stool, flashed a quick bright glance at Adrian's father, and said, "Excuse me a minute, will you? I've just thought of something I want to say to Adrian."

Adrian was not on the porch. But she saw him dimly in the starlight, standing with Sumner beside him, looking up at the sky. She ran across to him and seized his arm. "Adrian, see here . . ." she said in a tone of quick breathless high spirits. "Why do we wait till next June to be married? Why don't we do it right now, in September? It just came to me—while I was playing that Bach. I felt something rising and rising in me, and all of a sudden it brimmed over. . . ."

Adrian had brought his gaze down from the stars to her face, his eyes for an instant retaining a remote contemplative expression. They met hers with a shock, as if a spark had leaped out between the two. All her face was sparkling clear, as he had never seen it, as he had not dreamed it could be. Her woman's face was bright like that of a happy loving child.

He was silent an instant, dazzled.

But when she saw his eyes on her, she flung herself headlong into his arms, clasping him in hers in a little girl's tight, single-hearted embrace. "I *want* to marry you, Adrian!" she told him willfully. "If ever I wasn't sure, I am now, after Francis' and Priscilla's visits. I can feel myself boiling over with *tempérament* to marry you."

"You don't know what you're talking about," he murmured fondly into her hair.

"Adrian! What a *Quaker* thing to say to the girl who insists on marrying you!" she cried out on him, drawing back to laugh.

He looked at her in wonder. Her face with its starry eyes seemed to give off a radiance of its own. She looked as she felt, as if with a clap of wings she could have soared into the air.

"I never saw anything in the world as beautiful as you are this minute," he told her, in the old lover's phrase.

"*Make* it September," she murmured, with a coaxing pretense of imploring, bringing her face close to his till he could see nothing but her shining eyes.

She was startled, a little frightened, by the roughness of his arms about her. And still more startled when she saw tears in his eyes. He said in an uncertain hoarse voice, "Oh, Matey, if I can only make you happy!"

4

THROUGH the open window admonishing chimes dropped down from the tower of Antwerp cathedral to tell them how lazy they were. "Lazy but unashamed," Adrian answered the solemn tolling of ten o'clock. "Being now married to Miss Penelope Gilbert, I'm far too happy to care whether it's noon or midnight."

They were still luxuriously in bed, idly debating plans for the day, although a good part of the morning had already passed and they had eaten every crumb of the frugal breakfast brought them by the red-faced brawny Flemish girl who was general help in their bare clean small hotel.

Matey agreed with her husband that being married made other things seem unimportant. She knew now what it meant to be married. And, as she had planned to predict to Priscilla, she had found out that in marriage as in everything else, the fact that Adrian was Adrian was all that mattered to her. Anything Adrian wanted, and wanted with those caressing hands, those eager lips from which hers took such living warmth—why, she wanted anything Adrian wanted. She wondered that there could be women so perverse as sometimes not to want what a husband who loved them wanted. But perhaps they had not all such darling *sweet* husbands as Adrian. She put her arms around his neck now and told him he was darling and sweet.

"Well, I never claimed to be a cave-man," said Adrian. "You can't say I deceived you on *that* point." He spoke whimsically but a shadow fell, ever so lightly, on his face.

"What's the matter, Adrian?" she challenged him.

He lay gazing up at the ceiling for a moment, and then turned on her his good and clear look of affection. "I want you to love me, Matey."

"I *do!*" she cried.

"So you do, darling," he said gently.

The intrusive clock struck another quarter-hour. They decided they really must get up and go to look at the Plantin Museum.

As they were sauntering back after a late luncheon, "Look here, Matey," Adrian suggested, "we've done about all these Flemish galleries we can take in for a while. Why don't we skip up to Holland and have a look at Vermeer and Rembrandt for a couple of days before we go on to Paris? It's no trip at all."

But with an energy which startled her, Matey found suddenly that there could be cases when she did not want what Adrian wanted. "No, let's take the Paris *rapide* this afternoon. I hate Holland," she said peevishly.

"Why, what have you got against the Dutch?" asked Adrian, surprised.

"Oh, I don't know," said Matey. But she did know. She had remembered. On a street corner outside the museum in The Hague a well-dressed mother and three attractive young people stood waiting for her to join them and suffer, while coming toward them, red and furious, obviously wishing they had been dead rather than there to see his . . . "I can't bear Holland!" she said.

"We will have it eliminated from the map," Adrian assured her. "On to Paris! I never did think much of the Dutch."

When they reached the tall old hotel on the rue de Seine in Paris they found a letter from Adrian's father which informed them among other Rustdorf news that if they were thinking of buying any furnishings they must bear in mind that the color scheme of their new living-room was settled by the three coats of Quaker gray with which he had just painted the floor. He also told them that he and Sumner got on well together, Sumner being company for him after Aunt Tryntje had gone to bed, "although I can't say that he appreciates my piano practice as yet. To tell the truth his real affection has gone out to Rebecca. No, not merely at mealtimes. He often goes out in the kitchen of an evening when there is nothing whatever on his plate and sits there, breathing in the memory of Rebecca's presence. It is not an unrequited attachment, I am happy to say. Rebecca loves him. I am sure she cuts out the tenderloin of our Thursday steak to give him. Where else can it go?"

"Isn't Father the world's champion quietist?" said Adrian. "That line about the color of the floor paint is to break the news to us that he's gone ahead and bought that Washington Street house for us as a wedding present, just as he threatened to. He can't afford it, you know. It'll take a good deal more than half his savings."

Matey folded the letter and put it away in her handbag.

"I *love* your father," she said. "I loved him from the first moment I saw him."

"Well, don't forget to love me too," said Adrian, taking off her hat to kiss her hair; "I'm the one you married. You keep getting off that subject."

Matey laughed. "I'm not allowed to get very far off it."

"It's hard work to keep you on it," he assured her; "I never saw such a wandering mind. Suppose you try putting your arms around me this minute. It might remind you of me again."

And as Matey a little shyly lifted her arms, he cried out roughly, catching her to him with passion. "Oh, Matey! Matey! If I can only make you happy!"

"I am happy," said Matey, wondering at him a little, as she often did.

"Not happy enough!"

"Happier than ever before."

"That's *nothing!*"

"As happy as I know how to be," said Matey.

"Maybe, but that's a subject you must study and learn more about," Adrian told her seriously.

"This afternoon," announced Matey, "we must call on Mme. Vinet."

"In that case," replied Adrian, "I'll have to buy a shirt and some collars. This homeless tourist business is hard on laundry. I've nothing left but the négligé-est of négligés. Suppose we walk over to the Bon Marché. You can stock up on ribbons or hairpins or handkerchiefs or whatever girls buy in department stores while I clean out the haberdashery counter."

As they walked, Matey went over again the information she had given him about the Vinet family so that he would make no mistakes in conversation. "Mme. Vinet is a widow now, you remember," she said, beginning at the top, "and lives with her two sons, Henri, who's about my age and a professor in a *lycée*, and little Paul—the one we used to call Polo—who must be thirteen now. He was a baby that first year we knew them. Henri's a mother-boy, regular French eldest son, never leaves her side, never has. I suppose he's what you'd call a sissy, but if you do call him that I'll never forgive you. He's always seemed like a brother to me—though not a bit like Francis. To play four-hand arrangements on the piano together, that's their idea of heaven, Mme. Vinet and Henri. The children were all educated at home so that they could have more music than at the *lycée*. At least that's the reason they gave. Since I've been grown up I've suspected it was because Mme. Vinet never could bear to have Henri away from her. Polo has always been a nice little boy, not spoiled as much as you'd think by being adored by his older brother and sisters. Mimi married six years ago, when she was only nineteen, not very romantically—a manufacturer much older than she—but very comfortably. Everybody was relieved. She's rather delicate, sort of nervous, not much vitality. She has three children and seems about the same as ever. A new baby since I was here last. She's the only one who has any money.

They have two houses, a nice comfortable one in La Ferté-en-Valois, out beyond Meaux, and a smaller little country place right on the Marne. Ziza is the best-looking of the family, quite striking in a vivid way. She's three years younger than Mimi and I . . . must be twenty-one now. She and I have always been closest to each other. She's the one I told you was always so excitable. She's married, too—to a Belgian—just recently. But she and her husband are making an after-the-honeymoon visit to her folks, so we'll be sure to meet them sometime if not today. They'll probably arrange a family reunion, and that includes us, for when I'm with them I seem just like one of the girls. They all say thee and thou to me, as if I were blood kin, and Mme. Vinet still brings me up in the way I should go."

Adrian started to say his lesson over, checking the Vinets off on his fingers, but Matey interrupted him shyly. "Adrian, I know you don't like secrets; still . . . let's not tell Mme. Vinet where we got the money for this trip? She's a dear, but they're all so everlastingly thrifty. . . ."

Adrian stopped her with a laugh. "I get you! Not a word—not a syllable. Any French person would be sure to agree with Aunt Tryntje that a solemn thing like a year's interest on your *dot* ought to have gone into hardwood floors and a furnace."

"There's one thing more," said Matey, constraint in her voice. "They none of them understand a word of English." She had kept out of her mind any picture of this part of the meeting as resolutely as she had pushed Holland out of sight.

"Oh, I'll get along," said Adrian comfortably. "None of my studio friends understand any English either. I've plenty of French of a sort."

Yes, he had, but what a sort! She had gauged its quality in Antwerp on the few occasions—buying tickets, or ordering meals—when she had not managed to slip unobtrusively ahead of him. She felt herself wishing that he did not know a word—could stay in safe uncompetitive aloofness.

They were at the door of the Bon Marché and she found that The Hague was not the only place peopled for her with unlaid ghosts of memories. "It's going to be hot inside, Adrian," she said. "Do you mind if I wait for you on a bench in the square?"

She sat down on the bench, her back to the big shop. She was afraid to go in. She was afraid of the silk counter, afraid that she would find her mother there, unable to make herself understood by a slow-witted, slightly deaf salesman, while her father leaned on the counter, apparently absorbed in admiring the quality of the silks, intervening finally with a start, as though just now noticing the difficulty and delivering the necessary explanation in a French especially diamond-faceted in contrast to the self-distrustful woolliness of his wife's. Matey was afraid she would forget that she was grown up and married to Adrian and would become again the drooping little girl who stood between the two, the child who had entered the shop bouncing with joy at the prospect of a new dress, but who now, wincing and looking down at her shoes, thought of nothing but how soon she could get back to the Vinets. She heard herself asked once more which color she wanted, and said once more, "Oh, *I* don't care," in a tone so dull that her father was justified in exclaiming, "If you don't, who's going to? Do you think we're buying this dress to amuse ourselves? I never saw such a dead-and-alive child!"

It wouldn't stay down in the black hole where she had pushed it. It streamed up like the genie coming out of the bottle and settled down around the married Matey on her bench. She might as well have gone into the shop with Adrian.

When finally she saw him coming toward her, a paper parcel under his arm, she ran to him, crying, "What in the world took you so long?"

"I struck a poor uneducated salesman from out Limoges way who couldn't understand my pure Théâtre Français vowels!" he told her, laughing. "See here, Matey, how about having a bust-up to celebrate our arrival at the old stand? How about—laying a wreath on Aunt Connie's grave as we go—how about a duck at Foyot's?"

"I'm awfully sorry, Adrian, but one of my sick headaches seems to be starting up. Calling on Mme. Vinet will be about all I can stand."

Adrian looked at her keenly. "You do look terribly tired, all of a sudden. Funny! You were all right a minute ago. Well, we'll be sensible and have dinner at the hotel." he said patiently.

The call on Mme. Vinet didn't turn out to be difficult. Adrian managed a few conventional phrases of greeting well enough, and for the rest of the visit there was nothing for him to do but be a correctly in-the-background new husband, while his wife and her old friend occupied the center of the stage with family news.

"What luck that you come at this time!" exclaimed Mme. Vinet. "Just when Ziza and her husband are down from Belgium spending a few days with Mimi. Why don't we all go out on Sunday to spend the day together? There's an early train to La Ferté, the one we used to take—remember, Mété?—for Sundays together in the country. It would be charming to have all you children together, you girls with your husbands. Wasn't it curious, little Ziza marrying an Adrien, too?"

"I never heard," said Matey, "how they happened to choose Louvain to live in."

"Choose? How did thy husband happen to choose R-r-rusdorf?' asked Mme. Vinet, her tongue tripping a little over the name. "Ziza's husband would ask you, 'Where else would a Conacq live but in Louvain?' One of those old plain provincial families, you know, who live for centuries in the same town. His father is professor of German literature there."

When Ziza and her new family had been thoroughly explored and commented on, the talk turned to Mimi. "Think of Mimi with three children!" marveled Matey.

"Why not? She has been married six years." Mme. Vinet considered Mimi's case for an instant, and then, "The queer thing for me is to think of any Vinet with money! One would think, brought up as she was, she'd feel shy in the presence of real cash. But she seems to find it perfectly natural."

"It's the absence of it that bothers people," contributed Adrian, his American r's harsh and heavy.

Matey did not look at him, feeling it more decent not to. What a terrible accent he had! He must be wincing over those r's. They were like her mother's, and brought before her the tense expression of her mother's face when she was speaking French. What time was it? she wondered. The large ornamental clock on the Vinets' mantelpiece had never run since she could remember, and she dared not look at her watch. She was tireder than she thought, and her headache was evidently going to be one of the bad ones. Depression fell on her gloomily. She laid it to the prospect of a day with the complete Vinet family—so many of them, and a new baby to exclaim over. It would be noisy! People tired her, *en masse* like that. And French families were always *en masse*. The familiar ache at the base of her brain began to hang its black veil between her and life. Mme. Vinet looked to her very plain and commonplace. With a malicious desire to give pain, which after the words were out quite shocked her, she asked, "I thought surely by this time I'd find Henri engaged to be married?"

Mme. Vinet's face changed. "Henri never seems to think of marrying," she said carefully. "His profession absorbs him wholly. And his music."

"She is as frightened as ever at the idea of living a minute without him," thought Matey crossly. She remembered the intimate special look the mother and son had had, and how it made the rest of them feel left out.

In the third-class railway compartment on the early omnibus train Sunday morning, she saw the same look pass between the gray-haired widow and the slight, pale, seriously bearded young man into whom the slight, pale, serious Henri had developed.

He did not remain serious very long in Adrian's society. It was the first time Matey had seen Adrian in French company. There was simply not room in her mind for the astonishment she felt as the train slowly rumbled along. He spoke French, as he had told her long ago and as she had heard for herself, very badly, with (it is true) a sort of wild student fluency and slangy abundance, but with inconceivable oddities of grammatical incorrectness, and an American accent as full-flavored (Adrian said it himself that morning) as molasses and buckwheat cakes. This was evidently not the first time he had been off for a Sunday in the country with vacationing French people. He seemed to know very well what they expect of such an outing. And being himself in his usual good spirits, he lent himself heartily to this expectation, using his unique French as a comedian would use a natural gift for farce. It flavored richly with its drollness the mildest of his humorous remarks, and rose at times through some particularly happy combination of current slang and unexpected mispronunciation to heights of absurdity which made even grave Mme. Vinet laugh to tears, as Matey had never seen her laugh before. His fantastic explanation, always in this extraordinary fluent comedy language, of what molasses and buckwheat cakes are to American life, reduced little Paul to such shrieks of laughter that he had to go out into the corridor to get himself a drink of water. Mme. Vinet and Henri looked at each other with an enchanted expression of satisfaction. One of their worries was lest little Paul, alone with them, should have too serious a life. The Vinets had always been a cheerful enough family in their subdued civilized way, but Matey had never suspected them capable of such outbursts of *le fou rire,* so much beloved by sober French people, as Adrian knew how to produce by his linguistic tomfoolery.

They poured out of the train at La Ferté in a state of hilarity which made Mimi—looking very matronly and settled, and rather too stout—inquire what the pleasantry was. "Me—I am the pleasantry, Madame Mimi," said Adrian, bowing, his hand on his heart.

Mimi shook hands with him, introduced him to her grave, substantially built husband, M. Bouvard; there was a fusillade of two-cheeked kisses among the Vinets, and they moved out of the station to dispose themselves in an elderly, well-kept carriage, dating from an earlier generation of the Bouvard family. Matey took her place between Mimi and Mme. Vinet on the back seat. The three men, Henri and Adrian already like old friends, and Mimi's husband, stout, dignified, and inexpressive, crowded together opposite. Thirteen-year-old Paul, his cheeks still glowing from the resounding greetings of his provincial kin, had been put up beside the driver, from which elevation he continually turned his head not to lose a word of what Adrian might say.

Ziza and her husband were waiting for them at the house, it seemed.

"How do you like her husband?" asked Matey.

"I like him," said Mimi, "but . . . I could wish Ziza did not like him quite so much."

"What is this talk," inquired Adrian, "of limits set to liking husbands? M. Bouvard, it is time for us to stand *en garde.*"

"Ah, Ziza is only just married," remarked Mme. Vinet. "Give her time."

"Fix bayonets!" said Adrian to M. Bouvard, imitating exactly the raucuous speech-tune of an army sergeant. *"E-e-e-n avant! 'arche!"* His accent added a color of burlesque to this which brought an explosive astonished laugh from the massive M. Bouvard. From the driver's seat came a delighted cackle. Adrian turned, his hazel eyes shining with fun, looked up at the little boy, and gave him a grave nod and look of understanding as

from husband to husband which sent Polo off into rockets of laughter again.

Mme. Vinet made an effort to think of the right conversation for people who do not live in Paris. "Did you have a good wheat harvest?" she asked. M. Bouvard, whose business was the manufacturing of plumbing-fixtures, stared out of the carriage as if looking for evidence, and gravely assured his mother-in-law that he believed it had been good.

The wheat had been cut long ago, but as Matey followed his eyes over the bare brown fields, there came back vividly—more vividly in memory than ever to her seeing eyes—the magnificence of the wheat in this part of France. The stubble in the broad sloping fields was brown now, but the hoarded seed was only waiting for the fall plowing for next year's glory. New ideas sprang nimbly up in her brain. What a history it had, wheat! Why had she never thought of it before? Handed down from the Aryan forefathers, their chiefest treasure, alive more than ever when they were crumbled dust in their graves . . . living as ideals live on, long past the death of those who cherished them. It was wonderful to be out in such a countryside. And what air! To come here from Paris was like going out from a stuffy room into a west wind. And yet she had not noticed in Paris that the air seemed stuffy. Oh, it was because her head had stopped aching! What a relief. It was going to be a lovely day.

They had arrived. She sprang from the carriage and ran to kiss darling Ziza, hung like a poppy on the arm of a blond young man as stout as he was tall, which was saying a good deal. *"Un vrai homme du Nord!"* thought Matey as she shook hands with him.

In the house, as the women were taking off their wraps in Mimi's pretty, overfurnished bedroom, "Thy husband seems like a French boy," remarked Mme. Vinet; "he seems like one of us. I feel already intimate. And Americans are usually so remote. Why, I would hardly know him for an American at all!" she said, struck with the idea. She added casually, "Except for his speech."

What was this singular lightening of the heart which Matey felt as she ran down the stairs? She felt like capering. It was absurd. She felt exactly, she thought, with no reason at all, as though she had had very good news—when she had been expecting bad. She laughed at almost everything—at the fatness of Mimi's new baby, at the way they avoided the stuffy French ceremoniousness of Mimi's overdraped bourgeois salon, and all piled into the kitchen, sunlit and copper-saucepan decorated, where the picnic baskets were being filled—at the frantic objections of that absurd, lovable Ziza to any plan of march to the river which would separate her from her husband.

She noticed that Mimi looked at her curiously, as, snatching her four-year-old boy by the hands, she began to dance *"Savez-vous planter les choux"* with him. And later on she caught the same look of inquiry from Mme. Vinet as, picnic-baskets in hand, the comfortable family party strolled along the country lane that led from Mimi's house to the banks of the Marne. "It is such a lovely, lovely autumn day," thought Matey. This friendly autumn sun was enough to make a paralytic leap and run. And how deep-hearted these civilized French people were, how warm the family feeling which kept them all together! How nice it was to be with them again! She began to sing at the top of her voice *"M. le Curé n'a pas deux souta-a-nes,"* a light-minded marching song Henri had brought back from his military service. Leading the others, she kept it going through all of its interminable variations.

As they finished the song, Mimi called out to Adrian, "You have brought back our old Mété to us!"

"How so?" inquired Adrian.

"She was such a gay little barbarian as a child . . . how she did upset all our rules the year she stayed with us!"

"Never!" cried Matey, astonished. "I was crushed! Submissive as a little mouse . . . I obeyed more rules than I had thought I could. . . ."

They interrupted her with derisive laughter, even Henri. "We always called that year 'our trip to America,' " he told her.

Adrian shook his head over a disillusionment. "All those stories of Matey's about how suppressed she was!"

They drifted apart in a narrow place in the lane, Henri and Adrian walking together. "Well she *has* been suppressed since then," said Henri. "I have not seen her like this, not since she was grown up." He added pleasantly the obvious "It speaks well for her husband."

For an instant Adrian did not hear him. He had been as mystified by Matey's high spirits as the Vinets, as Matey herself. He was thinking sadly that Matey seemed happier now than she ever had with him. This was the light-heartedness into which he had so longed to open the door for her. He had seen one glimpse of it, the night of Francis' visit, the evening when they had decided not to put their wedding off till June. He had tried, tried with all his love, his tenderness, his passion, to free her for it again. But he had been in the dark. He had not known where to throw his effort. What was it that kept her hesitating, sent her in the midst of cheerfulness into those inexplicable numb fits, made her unable to step off freely into gayety as she was doing today? Henri's remark finally penetrated to his attention. "I'm afraid it can't be laid to her husband," he answered, trying to speak lightly. "It's rather improbable that the best of husbands should affect her all at once, today, like this." He returned with the equally obvious "It's probably being with old friends of whom she's very fond." But to himself he thought eagerly, wistfully, "Could it be she's just waking up to our being together . . . for always . . . and liking it? I'll ask her. Why not?"

"How is it, Mété," Mme. Vinet was saying as she walked beside Matey, "that thy husband knows our marching songs and the commands of our army?"

"He spent a year and a half in Paris, studying painting," explained Matey.

"I thought you said he is in a bank."

"So he is." She hesitated, decided that the plainest possible statement was the best, and explained, "He thought he had not enough talent to give himself to painting."

Mme. Vinet needed no embellishments on this statement. "Ah?" she murmured. "Not an ordinary young man." She looked ahead to where Adrian was carrying Mimi's delighted four-year-old. The sound of his laughter and the delicious mirth of the child came back to them. She said seriously to Matey, as she would to a daughter, "Mété, I think thou hast a good husband. Thou must be a good wife to him."

Matey was a little surprised by this. It was very different from any of the comments, spoken or unspoken, she had received on her marriage from her American circle. No one had ever put it to her from that side. "Thou must learn how to make up to him for what he has put away," said Mme. Vinet earnestly, as though Matey were still a little girl under her care.

But it was Ziza, little mad inflammatory Ziza, who challenged Matey most directly. After the lunch, stuffed and somnolent, they lay about the river bank, smoking and "making their digestions." The two Adrians with leisurely gestures were bailing out a waterlogged boat, preparatory to taking their brides for a row on the river. Matey and Ziza sat together, their backs against a great sycamore, looking down on their men. "*Are* you happy in marriage, Mété *chérie?*" Ziza asked pouncingly. "Are you making your husband happy?"

"Well, I hope so!" said Matey, heartily, she thought.

Ziza replied, "No, you're not! Not what I call happy, or you couldn't answer in that voice. You are not happy as I! I am crazy, crazy, crazy about my husband!" Each impassioned *folle! folle!* burst up from her like a ball from a Roman candle. "You're not going to be happy like Mimi, are you?" she inquired. "Like a hen or a cat?" Her great dark eyes glowered at the idea.

"How can anybody tell what he's going to be?" asked Matey.

"Well, I can," said Ziza; "I know exactly how I'm going to be. I'm going to worship Adrien every hour of my life. Do you worship your Adrian?" she asked. "Do you think him the most beautiful man in all the world?"

Matey looked down at Adrian and saw him distinctly as an ordinary-looking young man with a sandy red mustache, rather lean and small compared to his heavy red-faced companion. The two young men were resting now, sprawled in the sun, smoking and talking quietly together. They were probably comparing notes, thought Matey, about conservative investment yields. Adrian's rather leather-colored face wore an expression made up of mild interest and of perfect quiet and composure. The murmur of their voices came up to Matey's ears. Even at that distance she could hear his strong un-French intonations. She looked at him more keenly, watching him as he smoked and talked and listened peaceably. After a moment, feeling her eyes on him, he glanced up, gave her a tender smile, lifted his hand in greeting, and turned back to his companion. He looked as natural and at ease, as little concerned with the impression he might be making, as—"as Sumner ever does," thought Matey, in a superlative of her own private language.

She said in a belated answer to Ziza's question—not that Ziza had noticed, having caught her own Adrien's eye and sent him an impassioned kiss—"Well, he makes me feel . . ." she stopped because the words that came to her mind seemed rather odd and inappropriate . . . "he makes me feel—different," she said finally. This was certainly a noncommittal statement, she thought, to set by Ziza's fireworks. But Ziza never did the expected. She flung her arms about Matey's neck and cried out, almost sobbing, "Yes, darling, darling, isn't it like being in a different world"—this was not nearly strong enough—"like being in another universe."

"Ziza is the same crazy little thing she always was," thought Matey. "I know why her mother and sister feel uneasy about her."

She glanced down at the stalwart young Fleming there with Adrian, and wished he looked less opaque.

Mimi came sauntering over and asked, "What are you children talking about so excitedly?"

"Our husbands!" cried Ziza, as if it were self-evident.

Mimi lowered herself a little heavily to the grass beside them, prosperity and maternity having made picnics slightly difficult for her. "Wait till you have children," she said.

"Do you *want* children, Mété?" asked Ziza, but she evidently had no interest in whether Matey did or did not, for she went on hastily, "I suppose I do. Adrien would like it, I imagine. But I would hate them if they got between Adrien and me—for a minute—for an instant!"

"You don't know what you're talking about," said Mimi. "Wait till you have your first baby."

"I'm no setting hen," said Ziza, running her pointed red tongue around over her red lips as she spoke, in her old expression for exasperation.

"You don't know what you are," said Mimi with older-sister complacency.

"I am Adrien's wife!" cried Ziza. "And that's enough for me!" She got up impatiently and ran down the bank to join the men.

Mimi gave Matey a look which said, "You see what we mean." She said aloud, self-righteously, "Now that's not the way *I* feel about my husband at all."

Matey made no answer. Out of this familiar tossing about of the idea of being married, a singular idea had occurred to her with great force. Why, she was married too—really married—permanently. This was not one of the things that would disappear behind the curtain of change. Adrian was always to be there, would never disappear or fade into the background with a move to another town. How strange that she should feel this only now? She had known it before. Why was it only now that she believed it? It took time, didn't it, for anything to happen?

Mme. Vinet, followed by Henri, now joined them. "Mété, tell us something about thy husband's family and home. It may be years before we see thee again."

Matey was very sure it would be years before they saw each other again. So, sitting on the bank of the Marne, the rich humanized French countryside about her, she tried to paint for them the small old Hudson valley town, and the rich humanized Dutchess County countryside. There was little in her picture that was new to them. The slow old town full of blood-kin and set traditions, the great-aunt with her passion for ancestors, the humorous, unambitious, musical father-in-law—they had seen all those in French provincial towns. It was not unlike what lay before Ziza. And Adrian's salary of $1200 a year which Francis had found so pitiable sounded normal to them. About what Henri had.

It was only when she chanced to speak of going to Meeting with Adrian and his father that they looked surprised. A darkening came over the face of the conscientiously anti-clerical Mme. Vinet. "Is thy husband a *pratiquant* of a church?" she asked, looking down at Adrian, her old dislike and fear of the inhumanities of religion shadowing her eyes.

"Well, not like any church you ever heard of," said Matey hastily. "I'll tell you about it."

They listened in astonishment. "No professional priests? Why, *I* might like a religion that nobody made his living out of," cried Henri.

"No music!" murmured Mme. Vinet, horrified.

"No toleration of war, really and truly?" said Mimi, already a European mother with sons.

No one made any comment during her attempt to give them some idea of a Quaker meeting. "It's not a bit like a church service with something active going on every minute," she told them. "It's an exercise in contemplation, really. Most of the time is spent in silence. Silences longer than you'd think possible. At first I fidgeted and coughed and noticed my finger-nails. But I was quite astonished to feel myself becoming, little by little, very quiet! At first just an empty quiet, like a waking sleep. But do you know, even that's awfully restful. And then, once in a while, up through the space cleared from the clutter of surface things, you feel a deep lifting of something more . . . like a slow tide rising. . . ."

She was silent. They looked at her in surprise. She was a little surprised herself.

"Do you—do you pray at those times?" asked Mimi, timidly, wistfully. "Now that I have children, I . . ."

"No," said Matey, trying to tell the truth. "You know I've never been at all religious. I don't think I have ever prayed."

"I call *that* praying . . ." said Henri decisively.

All this talk about praying made Mme. Vinet a little uneasy. "Won't they ever get the boat ready?" she asked, looking down at the group by the water's edge.

"All ready for the boat ride. Brides first!" sang out Ziza, turning toward them.

They left Mimi sitting under the tree, musing, her head bent down. In spite of her good husband and prosperous home and nice children, Mimi's old pensive look seemed close to the surface.

In the rumbling, jolting, badly lighted interior of the third-class compartment going back to the city, conversation was difficult. And they were all pleasantly drugged with their dose of fresh air and exercise. The Vinets slept frankly, peaceably, little Paul with his head on his older brother's lap. Matey's eyes slowly flickered open and shut. For a moment it seemed to her that she was a little girl again, returning with the Vinets from a Sunday expedition into the country. Adrian leaned to her ear. "This morning," he asked her softly, "when you were all at once so gay, singing and dancing . . . *what was it?*" She opened her eyes and tried sleepily to remember. "I don't know," she answered. "Do you ever know the reason for a change of mood? I just seemed all of a sudden to enjoy things more."

She saw that her answer had disappointed Adrian and added, "I'd tell you, Adrian, if I knew, truly I . . ." And then it came to her. "Oh, yes, I remember perfectly now. It was the country looking so lovely—and something or other about the wheat that came into my head. And the fresh air had stopped my headache."

"Ah," said Adrian.

He added, "I hope it doesn't ache now."

"Not a bit," she told him; "I never felt better. It's been a lovely day, hasn't it? Aren't the Vinets nice? Isn't Ziza a wild little darling?"

She laid her head down on his shoulder and fell again into a waking doze, all sorts of disconnected pictures wavering through her mind, like things slowly falling down through water—Sumner sitting sentimentally in Rebecca's kitchen of an evening; the enigmatic expression in Priscilla's eyes, during the long silences of their Quaker wedding; a chemise she had left lying across a chair in the hotel bedroom, in which she must remember to run a ribbon, the long flexible themes in the Arietta of the Sonata Mme. Vinet had played while they were waiting for supper at Mimi's; and then, as clearly as if she had seen them out of the train window, a preposterous pair of big Dutch country boys, pedaling madly along on a tandem bicycle, their huge, their voluminous, their incredible trousers bellying in the wind like homespun sails. She remembered perfectly where she had seen them, though she had not thought of them from that day to this. It had been in Amsterdam, in the midst of the city traffic. How ridiculous they had looked, and how heartily and goodhumoredly they had returned the laughing shouts and greetings of the city crowd. They had looked up at the little girl she was then, leaning from the hotel window, laughing and waving her hand at them, and had lifted their flat Dutch caps with a gay gesture of comedy. Funny that should come into her mind now!

"Adrian," she said impulsively, "I don't know what made me so contrary about Holland. Now I think of it again, I think it would be fun to sail for home from a Dutch port, and stop over in Louvain to see Ziza on the way north."

"Rising from the vasty deeps of non-existence, I salute thee, Holland," said Adrian. "I always did sort of like the Dutch."

5

Of the honeymoon fortnight in Paris Matey remembered best, after that day with the Vinets, the visit to Minarossi's, and the first time she went to the Louvre with Adrian. The Vinets being musical rather than artistic, she was very much more familiar with the Salle Gaveau than with the Louvre and had never so much as heard of Minarossi's. There was little to see when they reached there, for in the dull midsummer season the moldy old rookery was almost deserted. The calico-clad *concierge* billowed out from her *loge* with a wide smile, a copious greeting, a handclasp for Adrian, and a searching look of scrutiny for his new wife. "I hope you will make M. Adrien happy, Madame," said the whiskered, triple-chinned, coarse old woman, "for he has a beautiful nature!" She and Mme. Vinet! thought Matey. Everybody in America had concentrated, as far as she could remember, on hoping Adrian would make *her* happy!

Adrian was laughing over his beautiful nature and accusing Mme. Dol of saying the same thing to every returned student, when some chance remark brought out the news that among the few painters still clinging to the old place in summer for the sake of reduced rent for studios was *le petit* Marceau.

"Oh, we must see him," said Adrian to Matey. "He's one of the old gang."

They went down the dilapidated stone steps into the unkempt small courtyard and clambered up steep narrow wooden stairs, glancing in through open doors to big dusty bare deserted rooms. Through the half-open door of one she caught a glimpse of an elderly Italian model posing in a banal attitude, leaning on a long staff. A few young men with easels sat in a semicircle around him, looking up intently at the nude brown withered body which Matey found as unlovely as the rest of this dingy palace of Art.

Le petit Marceau being found (a study in still life on his canvas, a cheese, a pear, a brass candlestick and an orange posing for him) proved to be a small young man with an immense brown beard, who at the sight of Adrian raised arms to heaven, and then springing forward with loud cries, kissed him soundly on both cheeks.

There was a flurry of introduction, greetings, the brown beard bent solemnly over Matey's hand while a pair of sharp brown eyes looked hard at her. ("He's wondering," thought Matey to herself, "whether I will make Adrian happy. They all are.") There were rapid-fire questions and answers about a dozen names strange to Matey, in the midst of which *le petit* Marceau interrupted Adrian by another ardent embrace. "*Bon Dieu, mon vieux!* If I could only tell thee how sweetly that monumental accent of thine rings in my ears! If only the rest were here to listen to it!" To Matey he explained what had already been very apparent to her. "Your husband, Madame, is a great favorite among us all."

"He's rather a favorite of mine," said Matey.

The little Marceau drew back with a Mounet-Sully gesture of dramatic surprise and admiration. "But you have no accent! you are French! *Mon* Adrien has married a French . . ." He was about to rush on her with an embrace.

"No, he hasn't," said Adrian hastily, laughing. "She's as American as I am. In fact she is a cousin of mine. Don't you see the strong family resemblance?"

"You must persuade him," said Marceau to Matey, "to return here, to give up this melancholy plan of his for making a bourgeois of himself . . ."

"God did that, not I," said Adrian, beginning to look restless. Passing quickly into farewells, he steered Matey back into the street.

"How did it look to you, dear?" he asked Matey.

She made the little sign with finger and thumb which had been whimsically agreed upon between them as an announcement of truth told with difficulty, and answered, "About as alluring as an empty barn. How did it look to you?"

"I don't believe I'll tell you," said Adrian. He so seldom spoke gravely to her, except of his love, that Matey was startled.

"Are you—do you *regret*—?" she asked him, expecting the usual instant reassurance that nothing was of any consequence to him so long as she was beside him.

"Well, why wouldn't I?" he asked. He seemed to feel no need to say anything more, walking along in a silence that was rather somber.

She felt a chill. She had supposed it an understood matter that she completely filled his life, his capacity for joy. Was that not the basis for marriage? She thought to herself that this was the traditional first step away from the honeymoon glamour.

At the Louvre Adrian was increasingly silent, a quite different companion from the one with whom she had "done" the Belgian galleries, as new to him as to her. The Louvre was evidently anything but new to Adrian. His feet carried him here and there, from one favorite canvas to another, with no thought on his part. In the room of the Italian primitives, one of the bored elderly guardians, shifting his weight from one aching foot to the other, looked hard at Adrian, broke into a smile, and came shuffling forward to shake hands with him. "Where have you been this long time, M. Fort?" he asked, and on being presented to Matey. "Ah, getting married? Well, half a year is not too long for that."

Would he, too? wondered Matey. Yes, it was obvious that he was asking himself, European fashion, as he looked at her, whether she would make a good wife for Adrian, rather than the other way around. "I used to copy here a good deal," explained Adrian briefly to her as they moved away.

He had never talked much to Matey about his painting, and had apparently not taken home from Paris a single canvas.

They walked around the room now, passing from the candor of the pink and blue and gold Angelicos to a canvas which gave Matey a quiet unesthetic emotion. It was an Italian painting of a grotesquely ugly bald old man with a bulbous red nose, leaning down to welcome a small fair-haired boy who came running happily into his arms.

Matey cried out, "Oh, Aunt Connie! The expression in the old man's eyes reminds me of Aunt Connie!"

And when they went away, as they did very soon, she stopped in the anteroom and bought a photograph of that picture.

"We'll hang it in the living-room over the mantel," said Adrian, "in memory of Aunt Connie. I always liked that too . . . but it was the red in the cloak that struck me. I like Ghirlandajo anyhow. He wasn't one of the great ones. None of his canvases ever gives you the authentic thrill. He knew that too. He just offered what he had, so simply, so . . . It seems as though . . ."

He was silent again.

In silence they came down the steps of the Louvre into the little shrubbery jungle of the small park around the Lafayette statue.

"Let's go and sit on that bench behind the lilac bushes," said Matey, and when they were there, as unabashedly as any *midinette* she gave her husband a long kiss. "I believe I love you, Adrian," she said, drawing away to look at him.

"Well, it's high time you . . ." Adrian made an attempt to strike the whimsical note, but his voice failing him, gave it up. His hazel eyes searched her gray ones deeply. "Oh, *Matey* . . ." he said with a long sigh.

It was the first time he had asked anything of her, the first time—was it not?—that anybody had asked anything of Matey.

Up from unknown depths in her heart came a flood of tenderness such as she had never felt. She flung open her arms to her husband. "Ah, *Adrian,* if I can only make you happy!" she murmured, her lips on his cheek.

6

The first summer after Matey's wedding, Priscilla was personally conducting a party to the North Cape and the sisters saw each other only for a day or two. The second summer Priscilla decided not to take her usual trip with a group of girls. She was rather tired of Europe, she wrote, and very tired indeed of girls "from the nicest families." She thought it might be a good idea to get acquainted with her small namesake. If Matey was really sure she wouldn't be too much trouble, with the baby and all . . .

Adrian agreed with Matey that Priscilla wouldn't be too much trouble. "But whatever can she find to do in Rustdorf for a whole summer?" he asked, answering himself, "Oh, of course, tennis. We must get the courts in extra good shape."

Except for a few mild outings and an occasional Saturday afternoon match of the Rustdorf Tennis Club with players from Newburgh or Poughkeepsie, there was nothing at all to amuse Priscilla, and for years she had been used to a great deal of amusing. In the winter Rustdorf people were not without diversions. They went occasionally up to Poughkeepsie to a concert, or to a lecture at Vassar open to the public, or after much planning and arranging of time and finances, went down to New York on the 5:20 train, coming back from concert or opera or theater on the 1:30, almost too sleepy to trudge home from the station. There was a Rustdorf chorus too, in which Matey and Adrian and Adrian's father sang, which every spring gave a public performance of one of the less difficult oratorios or cantatas. As long as the ice held and the snow was good there was plenty of winter fun. Of course a Bridge Club, and a Village Improvement Society, and a District Nursing Association, if you could call their meetings diversions. And people invited each other around for the evening meal which was still called supper. But the summer Rustdorf was of an abysmal quiet. It is hot in the Hudson valley. All nature settles down to a slower-paced life. Adrian's father said, "Our Dutch blood comes to the top in summer."

Of course young mothers with first babies are never anything but hurried. Summer brought no slackening of speed to Matey that year. Except at Meeting, she seldom had an instant of leisure in which to think connectedly of Priscilla or anything but the next task to be done. But when Adrian called her attention to it, she agreed with him that it was a wonder that Priscilla, who at this time of year was usually making the rounds of the leather shops on the Ponte Vecchio or taking for the tenth time the drive to Amalfi, could endure such an existence as theirs.

Even the daily tennis outing was Rustdorfian. They usually walked down Washington Street, Adrian pushing the baby-carriage, the three rackets lying across the foot. From the other direction came Dirck Davis and his young wife, also pushing a baby-carriage. Adrian sometimes asked Matey, "How *does* Priscilla stand us?" Sometimes they had to wait before a court was free, for tennis was one of the fixed Rustdorf traditions and both courts were often occupied. They sat about on the old green-painted benches then, chatting with neighbors they found there. Everybody was related to everybody else by blood, or marriage, or old neighborhood habits; everybody knew the resources, financial and intellectual, of all the rest; it would have been impossible for any one to pretend to be other than he was, so nobody bothered to try. Matey had never heard such natural talk as there was in Rustdorf or felt so natural herself as she did, sitting under the old elms, exchanging impressions of the day's news, watching with one eye the players flashing about the courts, and with the other keeping track of the baby sleeping in her baby-carriage. But she realized that what seemed restful to her might easily seem a frightful bore to Priscilla, used to people for whom social contacts meant assuming an attitude, a manner, an expression, quite different from their natural ones.

If Priscilla had been at all musical she might have been interested in the odd relationship growing up between Matey and Adrian's father. But music was one of the many things which Priscilla had long ago locked out. On Sunday afternoons, the usual time for one of the joint weekly séances before the piano, Priscilla wrote letters. So the only break in the monotony of the tennis-less Sundays was going to Meeting, in the old stone Friends' Meeting House.

For Priscilla went to Meeting as naturally as she fell into other Rustdorf ways. Nobody had dreamed of asking her to go. Everybody was surprised that she did, everybody, that is, except Aunt Tryntje, who diagnosed it as "the Van Benthuysen coming out in her." Matey spent considerable time in Meeting wondering why in the world Priscilla had ever thought of coming. Sometimes she sat looking at her sister's serious, absent profile, marveling at the invisible thickness of the wall that could stand between human beings so close to each other. For she had been able to share her marriage and motherhood with Priscilla as little as her courtship. Even over the exciting new daughter and niece, she had never been able to say anything better than "I can hardly believe she's real. Wherever *do* they come from—a new person like that, all at once?" or "Aren't little babies too funny when they sneeze!" and once when together they were bathing the baby, "Who do you think she looks like, Adrian or me?"

That last question, trivial as it seemed, had received a silent answer from Priscilla louder than her words, which were merely, in a casual tone, "Why, a little like Francis, don't you think?" Ominous as a mutter of distant thunder, something unspoken passed between the two women. Matey answered, looking at the mysterious unknown new member of humanity on her knee, "Oh, do you think so? I never noticed." But she had. And though it startled her to hear in what Priscilla did not say an echo of what was in her own mind, she felt comforted to know that Priscilla shared it with her as Adrian could not. "Hand me the talcum powder, will you, Priscilla?" she asked.

During an especially silent Meeting one Sunday it occurred to Matey that if she could but put out of her head the idea that words were the only expression of what people felt, Priscilla and she might enjoy more peaceably their affection for each other than if she continued always trying vainly to drag into the net of syllables something which—for them—lived in another, deeper medium. To accept, once for all, this mute speech as their true one might free her from her troubling sense of the disharmony between their trivial talk and the strength and beauty of the tie between them.

As they walked home together through the Sunday stillness of the old town, she took Priscilla's hand in hers. For a time they walked hand in hand as they had when they were little girls. She felt Priscilla's fingers gently return the pressure of hers.

Matey thought, "How lonely women must be who have no sister!"

Presently Priscilla said in a low peaceful voice, "Elms are nice for street trees, aren't they, when they get old?" As she spoke she looked up at the roof of the leafy arcade over the sidewalk.

"Yes, I think they're more graceful than maples," Matey answered, following the upward look.

A quiet happiness seemed to fill the old street from side to side. Matey was not sure, but it seemed to her that Priscilla felt it too.

As the summer days slid by, Adrian began to guess that Priscilla was not too frightfully bored by Rustdorf. He said to Matey once, "Who'd have thought that Priscilla could draw her breath in our equatorial domesticity?" and added, "Maybe she is too suffocated by it to get out."

She never said whether she liked it or not, but she stayed on and on, making herself more or less useful, refusing various vacation invitations to Maine and the Adirondacks from one or another of her wide circle of acquaintances. Hearing Matey say once that in her letters to the Vinets she never felt she gave them any idea of what her life now was, Priscilla bought a camera and took some snapshots of Matey and Adrian and the baby, and their old story-and-a-half stone house, green-shuttered, with the tall locust trees towering slimly over it, and of the distant view of the Hudson from the windows of her bedroom. Prints of these were sent to the Vinets and to *le petit* Marceau and others of Adrian's studio comrades with whom he kept up, at long intervals, a desultory correspondence. In due time the Vinet girls sent back letters with snapshots of their children, homes, and husbands. For Ziza now had a baby, a little boy. "I'm ahead of you, Mété," she wrote exultantly; "I have two Adriens to your one." Priscilla had never known the Vinets as well as Matey did, but she read these letters all through and looked attentively at the photographs. She made no comment on them beyond "Isn't it queer, Mme. Vinet has four grandchildren now, and all boys."

Adrian said, *"Le petit* Marceau—do you remember him, Matey?—has a boy too, he writes me."

Aunt Tryntje interrupted her count of knitting stitches to remark, "People used to say that was a sign of war."

Priscilla's tolerance of her namesake was perhaps more marked than any other sentiments she might be having in Rustdorf, and this although the cocoon-like little Priscilla was in the two-months-old somnolent, sometimes damp, occasionally sour-smelling and vociferous stage of development usually disliked by sophisticated unmarried aunts. Matey herself, excited and fatigued by the complications of caring for a baby, was occasionally out of all patience with her small daughter. But Priscilla, though she was a little shy of taking responsibility, seemed never to tire of being with the tiny scrap of flesh, so amusingly human. She often volunteered to be nursemaid while the baby slept in her carriage out of doors or lay there waiting for her next meal, regarding the world with very round blue eyes. Aunt Priscilla always had a book with her, or a writing tablet. But she wrote few letters and did not read much. Glancing out of the window as she flew about the housework in the precious interval of the baby's nap, Matey often saw her sister sitting idly, her head tipped back against a tree, doing nothing at all in the warm shadow woven out of tree-green and sun-gold.

"Never," she told Adrian, "never since I can remember did I see Priscilla doing nothing. She was always busy about something every minute."

"Maybe making up for lost time," suggested Adrian. "If I'd been busy every minute of my life I'd want to rest by the time I was thirty-three."

Matey herself was rather often nervously and physically tired, "*wild*" she sometimes told Adrian, because there were more things to do every minute than she had thought possible. She grabbed at one, half did it, and was summoned imperiously to something else, until she was sometimes crosser than ever before in her life. She snapped at Adrian occasionally, and he rather snapped back, for his nights were broken, too. But it oddly did not matter much. Sometimes Matey, remembering the tragic importance which the very intonation of a word had had for her, how a mere impatient look from her father to her mother had filled her heart with foreboding, could not understand why a hearty exchange of impatient exclamations with Adrian seemed to leave no more impression on the color of her day than did the chance small discomfort of setting a hairpin crookedly in her hair and taking it out to set it straight.

The point seemed to be that Adrian was entirely different—to her—from any one else living. It was not, as Ziza seemed to feel, a passionate adoration of everything her husband did which made her married life unrecognizably different from anything she had known before. Little habits of his, his unpunctuality, his whistling, his waiting too long before going to the barber's to have his hair cut, annoyed her to the point of exasperation. It seemed to be rather his permanent nearness to her, and hers to him, a nearness immeasurably beyond anything she had dreamed possible. One Sunday morning as they lay talking together in the peaceable quiet of a rare vacation dawn when the baby slept late, she gave him an impression that had come into her mind as she had waked and found herself with her head on his shoulder. "Honestly I hardly knew for an instant which was my flesh and which yours," she said. "Do you know, Adrian, lots of times I feel closer to you than to me."

"I know what you mean all right," said Adrian. "I've thought of it too—I believe I'd tell you things I've always kept dark from myself."

"Well, that would mean," began Matey, on the trail of a new idea, "that sex helps bring people—instead of the way everybody—"

But then the baby did wake up with her usual vital, hungry, attention-demanding yell, and whatever abstract idea had been crudely before its time trying to come to life in Matey's mind, slid back safely into the fertile formlessness where during this period most of her ideas lay, darkly striking roots into rich soil. The unending urgent tasks of their always disorganized day had begun. They had separated to go to their different watches, Adrian now on one deck and she on another. In a moment she had the baby in bed with her, and Adrian, gone sleepily downstairs in slippers and dressing-gown to start Sunday breakfast, was shouting up to her that the milkman had forgotten to leave the milk and was there any left from yesterday. Over the greedily nursing baby she shouted back uncompromisingly, "No, not a drop!" so loudly that it sounded almost like an oath, and grimly left him to wrestle unaided with this problem.

They had begun another day of their cruise, during which they would both rush about from side to side of their small undermanned craft, pulling at this rope and frantically letting out or furling this sail, like excited inexperienced sailors in windy weather. For whatever else they were, they were not becalmed. The lifting plunge forward of the deck under their feet as the following wind pushed hard on their sails made them stumble sometimes, and catch at each other, and for a moment stand unsteadily, locked together close, the keen forward-rushing wind of life loud in their ears.

It was not at all either what the sentimental or the brutal reports of marriage had led Matey to expect, although she had really "expected" nothing, drifting forward in that carefully acquired skepticism of all theories of life which she had learned in college. She had "expected" nothing very exactly and she did not know very exactly what she was getting because she had no time to consider the matter. The raw material of life poured in on her with such speed and in such bulk that she could not even begin to get it in order, could only toss it here and there in heaps, to make room for what would be borne in by the next day's high tide.

She could not have reported accurately on any part of all this newness. Sometimes she loved her small daughter almost to agony; again, on the very same day, when she was tired, it was not love she felt but indignation over the egotism with which the baby insisted that the universe revolve around her small person. Sometimes this indignation toppled over from a too swelling crest into outrageous laughter. She and Adrian were often overtaken by helpless mirth at the Nero-like tyranny of the newcomer. "The nerve of her," cried Adrian, "pushing us off the center of the stage like this!"

Matey had not laughed so much—or scolded so much—or cared so intensely about anything—or been so tired—or felt herself so flooded with vitality—not since she had been a little girl, playing. If Priscilla had ever asked her, "Well—?" Matey's report on marriage would have been only a wild half-laughing, "Why, now, blow wind, swell billow, swim bark! The storm is up and all is on the hazard."

Washington Street—the one which was always going to be paved—had been filled up in modern times to make the grade more even. The large front lawn of the young Fort ménage was several feet below the street, from which a short flight of stone steps led down to their front path. The sidewalk thus lay about on a level with the eyes of the people in the house or on the lawn, and Adrian pointed out to Matey how the passers-by on foot or in carriages (there were as yet but few automobiles), coming and going in each direction, made a long moving many-colored band or frieze, sharply defined below by the empty green plane of the lawn and above by the dense foliage of the elms. The figures on this decorated band were for the most part far enough away to be soundless, which Adrian insisted brought out their colors more brilliantly. Matey would never have seen this for herself, but once her attention had been called to it, was quite taken by the idea and now saw it with Adrian's painter-eyes.

Whenever they glanced up there was a new design, a new composition to look at. Sometimes a group of children loitered along the sidewalk, talking loudly, tagging each other and leaping suddenly to one side with deer-like bounds; sometimes a farmer's wagon went slowly by with a red-and-white calf in the back; or a nicely painted ancient phaëton with one of Aunt Tryntje's old-lady friends driving a jogging horse; or a half-grown boy flashed along swallow-like on a glistening bicycle; sometimes, going to or from the factory, a line of powerfully built workmen in rough old clothes sculptured to significance by the strong bodies under them; or a well-pressed suit of clothes went satirically by, folding and opening the creases of its trouser-legs in the motion of walking, the face of one of the merchants of town topping the coat and white collar; or rattling and shiny, a smart red-wheeled dog-cart from one of the "estates" out in the country. If it were no more than the grocer's wagon, or elderly Peter Russell with his brood of unkempt motherless little girls, something was always being painted by the airy brushes of sun and shadow on the frieze which hung there, halfway up that eastern wall of their world.

One day it had rained hard in the morning so that the courts were too wet for tennis. Adrian spent the tennis hour pushing the lawn-mower over the (always!) too long grass of the front lawn. Priscilla went out on the front porch with a book which soon fell shut on her knee as she sat idly brooding. The baby was "being good" although awake. She lay on a blanket on the grass, making futile grabs at the unattainable feet dangling in the air at the end of her short legs, occasionally murmuring a good-natured remark to herself about the game she was playing.

Matey stood for a moment at the house door to look at all this. She was tired, as she often was, too tired even to remember what there was urgently needing to be done. She went slowly to where the small Priscilla lay and sat down beside her on the blanket. At once her released body drifted into a sort of physical somnolence. She leaned against the tree and thought of nothing at all, the only thing in her mind a vague wonder that she could possibly feel, as she often did in these days, too tired to draw her breath, and yet have this new savage magnificent underswell of conviction that there was nothing—*nothing!*—that she could not do if necessary. The whir of Adrian's lawn-mower was rhythmic. On the outdoor frieze sunlight and shadow painted three small children, tumbling forward with a furry black puppy. Back of them towered a golden hay-wagon, pulled by two bright bay horses, stepping slowly with a firm air of being adequate to what there was to do, like an echo to what was in the background of Matey's fatigue.

Her eyelids dropped shut, as though the sunny quiet and the singsong of the lawn-mower had put her to sleep.

Did she go to sleep? It seemed to be from a wide realm of other-consciousness that she emerged with the slow beat of her eyelids opening. The baby still lay beside her, placidly untroubled by never reaching her feet, the puppy's laughing yelps came clearly though faintly from down the street, the hay-wagon was just ponderously moving off at the end of the frieze. It could not have been long. And yet, for a heartbeat Matey opened her eyes upon another world.

It was just what it had been, of course. And yet wholly something else. Oh, lovely! lovely! heartbreaking with beauty! This was her world, her corner of life, just what she had known she had . . . but transfigured as if it and she had been carried up to another new, unthinkable dimension . . . and yet it was not new at all. Once before she had felt this melting into strange heavenliness of something quite familiar and old. She remembered now. The two moments fused together . . . she was still Matey Fort, sitting under one of her own trees, a grown woman, a mother . . . and she was also a little ignorant surprised child leaning over a red-plush railing while up from the depths, borne past her on the angel wings of the violins, came the voice of revelation.

She was on her feet. She turned to Adrian now as naturally as she moved from one thought to another in her mind. She ran across the lawn to him. "Adrian, Adrian!" she said in an eager low voice, shaking his arm a little. "Now I know what heaven will be . . . the same, the same as life, and yet transfigured . . . all glory . . . like something you've heard on the piano played by the whole orchestra, *you* know!"

No, he did not know. Had no idea what was in her mind, looked bewildered. He could not, of course, Matey remembered now, share in a long-past moment of hers, which had been too impalpable for her to tell herself in words. But she could tell him more in words than she had ever been able to tell herself. She knew she could! Was he not closer and clearer to her than her own unknown self? She could say it out, if she could hold his hand as she now did in both hers, if she could feel that physical nearness which had first taught her the road out of solitude. Quick, before the glow faded—"Why, Adrian, here is just what I have always had . . . what everybody has . . . sunlight, the earth, trees, a shelter, food . . . they meant nothing to me . . . I don't believe I ever in my life really looked at them till just now. But for an instant, over there, in the quiet, I saw what it all makes for me . . . with you, with the baby. Why, *now* it's . . ."

After all it was not with words she told him.

They stood hand in hand, smiling into each other's quiet eyes.

On the porch behind them, Priscilla—they had forgotten her—stirred in her chair.

That night before she dropped off to sleep Matey's memory presented her with an old picture—a little girl, not so very many years older than her own little girl, trotting along a narrow path, unquestioningly, turning her head from one side to the other to watch the tall green bushes of the broom. Down the path, out of sight of the child, waited terror. But Priscilla had been there, who knew there was nothing to be afraid of. Matey thought drowsily, "It's the other way around now."

7

MATEY had always wanted a listener for her music. At least, years before, she had thought it would be lovely if Priscilla would share what she was doing at the piano. And now she had a listener, Adrian's father. In a way Adrian was a listener, too. He liked to hear her play, especially if it was something he already knew and liked. But he soon became accustomed to the sound of the piano in the house and was capable of getting up in the middle of a favorite piece of music to open the furnace draught or to make sure the baby-carriage had not been left out in the rain. This was the way most people listened to music, Matey knew. That is, they thought about other things a good deal. The difference between most people and Adrian was that he did not pretend to anything more than he was.

Adrian's father, on the contrary, took root in his armchair with her first note and never stirred till after the last one. Yet for a long time his way of listening rubbed Matey's susceptibilities the wrong way as much as Adrian's "naturalness." He listened with intensity to every note, but there was no more recognition of Matey in this concentration than in Adrian's way of remembering a house errand that needed to be done. There were moments in that first period of her Rustdorf life when she was out of all patience with her father-in-law for his way of reducing her to no more than a sheet of glass through which he gazed at the composer's intention. His silences were monumental. And when he broke them it was never to refer to Matey's playing, no matter how good it might have been. What he said was, "Funny, isn't it, how that change of key, just a mechanical mathematical device, should get down through your brain into your feelings." Or, "Well! who ever would have thought that to set a triplet in the middle of a run would give it wings like that." Often he said nothing at all. Sometimes did not even remember, when she finished, to thank his daughter-in-law.

In many encounters of that first year with Adrian and his family Matey was piqued by what Dirck Davis' young Maryland wife, Flora, called plaintively "their Quaker ways." She and Flora as newcomers occasionally sympathized with each other about Rustdorf customs and had a catch-word in common—"There, Isaac, that is a good hat"—which they often quoted to each other with a smile. It was drawn from a story of Aunt Tryntje's about a Friendly hatmaker of the town in early days who had been asked by an elderly Quaker neighbor to make him a beaver hat. When he presented it to the purchaser he said, "There, Isaac, that is a good hat that will last thee all the rest of thy life, if thee dies in any sort of season."

Matey sometimes repeated this phrase spitefully to herself at the piano, her father-in-law at her elbow. She could not but be affected by the intense interest Adrian's father took in the music open to him through her playing; she was, as a matter of fact, insensibly coming to be half of a musical personality of which her father-in-law was the other half. But she was none the less often vexed and exasperated by him and agreed heartily with Flora Davis when she said in confidence, "Seems as if Quakers just make a *point* of not having nice manners, doesn't it."

That is, she had thought she agreed with her, until the evening when she played at a benefit musicale given at one of the handsome "estates" near Rustdorf. It was the country home of a wealthy New York family of Dutch origin who from time to time took a notion to "join in the life of the community." Young Mrs. Fort had been asked to play, and prepared her music and her gown with more care than she would have been willing to admit to any one but her brother. She and her father-in-law were working their way through the earlier Beethoven Sonatas that winter, but she knew better than to offer such undramatic fare as that. She began to practice some showy Liszt, but Adrian's father so took the luster from it by his silent bewilderment at her choice that she threw it down pettishly and decided on the Chopin Etude in C Minor—the "Revolutionary." She found it outrageously difficult to get up to tempo, quite beyond her usual capacity, and she was obliged to give hours of work to it for several weeks before the musicale, revenging herself on her father-in-law by never letting him hear a note of it.

The musicale was held in a handsome drawing-room and was carried out according to the recipe for what is known as a "brilliant affair." "Like a faculty party," thought Matey, looking out over the restless glitter as she sat before the piano. She was stirred and pleased to be the center of these moneyed men and women, but before striking her first note she waited with a sternness taught her by Mme. Vinet, till perfect quiet filled the room. "If faculty wives had as much money to spend on their clothes as these," she added to herself.

Perfect silence finally did fill the room. Matey played. Chopin's tocsin clanged out its bronze notes savagely in the midst of a decorous silence.

When the vibration of the *fortissimo ed appassionato* ending had died away, the audience applauded. They applauded generously, having been surprised by the unexpectedly vigorous performance of the young provincial matron, invited only to gratify local pride. And what they applauded was the player's skill and not the music. There was no doubt about that. After the concert was over, they crowded about her, filling the air with the correct catchwords which they had learned from their parents and which they were teaching their children, "Perfectly *fas*cinating!" "Such a lovely touch!" "How can you ever keep up such a *won*derful technique!" Here were the nice manners Matey and Dirck Davis' wife had missed. These people were well bred enough to admire her and not Chopin. But living with the two Adrians had trained her ear to too fine a pitch of accuracy; it heard a crackled flatness in this good breeding. She did not feel exhilarated, she felt grim, as she put off her excited sharing of Chopin's violence and put on the correct smile to match the nice manners of these nice people. And when she heard her own voice saying brightly, "*So* good of you to say so!" and "Oh, you're so *very* kind!" she felt belittled and trivial and depressed. She looked from one smiling pleasant face to another, trying to find in one of them the awakened expression of some one who has really heard music. But they were all alike masked to uniformity by their formulas. Formulas were what Adrian—what all Quakers—lacked. Matey, smiling and grimacing by the corner of the piano, felt she did not miss them as much as she thought she had.

One man said, "It's absurd to think of such a pianist being buried in a place like Rustdorf." His intention was evidently no more than to say in a slightly new manner the "how perfectly *fascinating!*" of the others. But Matey heard in his words a complacent implied assumption of superior musical intelligence in the audience before her. She found this so unexpected and naïve that all at once her grimness vanished in a laugh.

The Sunday after, without warning him, she played that Etude for Adrian's father. He sat motionless from the opening cry to the peremptory violence of the last four chords, and then rising all in one piece, went blindly out, not noticing that she existed. That was one time when she had not minded in the least his Quaker ways.

In fact from that time on she slipped with less friction into the dual personality which she and her father-in-law were creating, became little by little, as far as he was concerned, more of a Quaker herself. She leaned more consciously on his capacity for musical attention, far riper and firmer than hers. It never wavered or slipped for a bar or two, as hers did. She felt him sometimes, half inside her own head, warning her to take care lest she lose the significance of a single phrase. Never before had Matey felt so physically the difference between music that has meaning in every phrase—and the other kind. Under their scrutiny "the other kind" withered up and blew away.

Sometimes her listener made inventive suggestions: "How about pausing just a breath before the end of that run? Wouldn't it add a freshness to the climax not to have that last note come as a matter of course?" Or "Hold on, hold on! Isn't the bass the important part of this?" Together they worked out small delicacies of interpretation, the sum total of which transformed their music into something richer than Matey had ever dreamed it could be. As she looked back on the playing she had done, it sounded childish and obvious.

The Minuetto of one of the Beethoven Sonatas was one of the things she had learned to play in Hamilton. The difference between what she made of it then and now was like a diagram, she thought, of what growing up amounted to. "You simply learn to see what's there instead of missing the important things by taking them for granted as a child does." She sometimes thought, "Isn't it strange how you go on accepting childishness for all there is, never guessing the depths of understanding that lie beyond, waiting for you to grow up to them?"

8

IT WAS, however, not at all with any depth of understanding but with stupefaction that Matey greeted Priscilla's announcement during her second summer vacation in Rustdorf of her intention to marry the faded elderly widower who lived in Aunt Connie's house and whom Matey had come to accept in the character of harmless neighbor under the title of Cousin Peter Russell. No, she acted toward the news just as Francis would have if he had known of it. She recognized in her consternation at Priscilla's having thus "thrown herself away" the very quality of Francis, and it kept her mute. The exclamations of alarm, of anxiety, of disappointment, might rise to her lips fast enough, but how could she bring them out save in Francis' voice? Never before had she seen so clearly how Francis had stood between her and that part of their common inheritance which Aunt Tryntje would call their Gilbert blood. How Francis' example had colored her estimate of values! The pictures he painted of his success in Pittsburgh, how profoundly they had affected her judgment of Rustdorf life!

"*Some*body ought to talk sense to Priscilla," she told Adrian, excitedly, "but *I* can't!" She could not, because the sort of sense she thought Priscilla ought to hear was the Francis sort.

She did not spare Adrian at least; she poured out her self-reproach to him, she cried out on herself for having been so blind. For she saw now that nobody had dreamed of hiding anything, that it had all been happening before her eyes. She had been so absorbed in her own interests she had not seen what was there. She could now trace it step by step back to the beginning which she had seen but had not recognized.

For that second of her summer visits, Priscilla had chanced to arrive in time for the Fourth of July celebration. The old town had its own way of celebrating the Fourth. As long as daylight lasted, it seemed like any American town on Independence Day. The children went about firing off crackers and flinging torpedoes down on the flagstones. Each child for himself, they created noise as copiously as each father and mother allowed. But from time immemorial the fireworks in the evening had been a communal affair. No true Rustdorfian ever bought any fireworks of his own. The money that he would have spent on them he gave to a common fund, administered (origin of this tradition lost in the mists of time) by the postmaster. It was one of the duties of the office of postmaster in Rustdorf.

On the evening of every Fourth as soon as darkness began to fall, people sauntered in pairs and groups out toward the rocks over the Hudson at the end of Barnegat Lane. The postmaster with the fireworks and a group of the more reliable adolescent boys were at the base of the rocks, on a half-circle of sandy beach in a cove, visible from above. To help with the Fourth of July fireworks was one of the Rustdorf rites of initiation into adulthood. All the little boys in town looked forward eagerly to the time when they would be down on the beach instead of leaning tamely against their mothers and fathers among the family groups scattered about in the dark on top of the cliff.

The Fourth when Priscilla was there for the first time was clear and starry. She had come in from Chicago on the late afternoon train and had received but the sketchiest account of what to expect when they all set off along the twilight lane, Adrian walking with Aunt Tryntje and carrying his fourteen-months-old daughter, Matey, Mr. Fort, and Priscilla coming after with cushions. By the time they came out on the rocks, darkness had fallen deeply. They could see nothing, but a sixth sense made them aware that all about them were groups of waiting people.

Across the river shone a garden of fire-flowers, each steady blossom of flame supported by the long wavering stem of its reflection in the water.

"How lovely those lights are!" said Priscilla. "Are they part of the celebration?"

"They are kerosene lamps," said Adrian's father in his quiet voice, "some of them smoky, set on kitchen tables in poor men's houses."

"Here is a rock with nobody on it," announced Adrian from one side.

They settled themselves to wait, hearing and feeling about them the rustlings and stirrings of the unseen crowd. A faint breeze came in from the river, flitted about, stepping capriciously on its light feet from one group to another, lifting locks of hair with invisible fingers.

From the cove below came spurts of boys' laughter.

With a majestic rush, up soared a rocket, tracing toward the stars a curve of fiery speed.

"Ah-ah-ah!" breathed the unseen, earth-bound crowd.

The rocket put all its soul into that upward flight toward infinity. But it was not enough. The poor finite thing could not reach even the fringes of the stars. It hung an instant in the blackness, and then with a soft explosion that was like a long-drawn breath, made its failure beautiful in a bouquet of many-colored falling sparks.

"Ah-ah-ah!" breathed the invisible crowd. A child's startled voice shouted out, "Oh, p'itty! p'itty!"

"That's a child seeing it for the first time," said Mr. Fort. He added in a musing tone, "I can remember very well when I saw it for the first time, sixty years ago. Can you remember your first time, Adrian?"

"Never'll forget it," answered Adrian.

"They're lovely here," came Priscilla's voice through the darkness with a surprised accent. "I never liked fireworks much before.

You're always too near. You hear people scolding about the fuses being wet, and how somebody's not holding the Roman candles right."

"Sh-sh-sh-sh!" Up sped another rocket, its tense flight cleanly drawn, up and up—all those human faces lifted toward the stars to follow its aspiration. The bright curve halted in mid-air, recognized its defeat, bent its head in resignation, and sighed out its life in a golden rain.

"The baby's watching it," announced Aunt Tryntje, who had claimed the privilege of holding little Priscilla. "She really does take it in, I'm sure. She lifted her face to follow it and put out her little arms."

"I wonder," thought Matey to herself with a start, a pang, at the idea that her baby might be beginning a life of her own, "I wonder if perhaps this will be one of the 'really' remembered things for her." And with the thought she saw it all differently, with a new richness and depth. She saw it as it might look to little Priscilla years from now, she saw the golden curve of beauty which had just died before her eyes, shedding an immortal brightness along the unknown future toward which the baby's feet were tending. Tears came to Matey's eyes. She felt herself humbled and exalted. It was the first step she had taken forward from physical maternity.

A flare of red flame blazed up luridly around the edge of the beach, showing the rocky walls of the cove and a line of black figures, arms melodramatically upraised toward the sky. "Roman candles now," explained Adrian's father to Priscilla. To Adrian he called, "Adrian, when was the first time you began to feel grown up?"

Adrian laughed. "Sure thing!" he said. "Same time you did, I bet—first time I was allowed to hold one of the Roman candles."

From each arm sprang up a ball of colored fire, leaping nimbly into the air, vanishing to leave the darkness free for those that followed. They rose in flocks like little sprightly birds, they died down, they rose again. "The allegretto after the largo," murmured Adrian's father in the ear of his son's wife.

The red fire faded down to darkness, the Roman candles were still. People stirred and rustled as though for a moment they had forgotten to breathe.

A child began to cry. It was quite near the rock where the Forts sat, but they could not see it. There was no quick maternal murmur of reassurance. No other sound at all but the low wordless complaint. They looked into the darkness, on this side and that, saying, "Why doesn't somebody quiet the little thing?"

Adrian said, "Perhaps it's lost. I'll see if I can't find it."

He left the rock and moved off, saying, "Somebody strike a match so we can see."

"It is here," said Priscilla, "near where I am. I felt its hands just now."

Adrian's father struck a match. In its yellow light they saw, painted on the darkness, a tiny flaxen-haired child, her face glistening with tears, her thin small hands groping out toward Priscilla. They saw Priscilla quickly lean and draw the little thing into her lap. The match went out.

"Yes, she must be lost," said Priscilla through the darkness. "I'll just hold her till the fireworks are over and we can find her mother."

"It's Peter Russell's youngest," Aunt Tryntje told her; "she hasn't any mother." She went on, in a lower tone, "The idea of Peter bringing that great brood of young ones here, with only himself to look out for them! He might have known he'd lose some of them."

"I suppose he wanted them not to miss what other children have," said Adrian's father.

"Sh-sh-sh-sh!" Another rocket burst from its pasteboard chrysalis and fled upward into its golden moment. In the faint light cast by its soaring Matey could see that the little girl had settled down into Priscilla's lap, one arm around her neck, her flaxen head laid on Priscilla's bosom.

"Right then and there," cried Matey to Adrian at the end of the summer, in one of her most Francis-like moods, "anybody with a grain of sense would have risen up and taken that child away from her. One look at her there ought to have been enough. But I never dreamed . . . how *could* I have dreamed!"

If she had not had sense enough to think of it then, the next day ought to have put her on her guard, she told Adrian in one of those later fits of remorse. But on that second occasion too she was absorbed with her own life. The fifth of July fell on a Sunday that year; Adrian's father and Aunt Tryntje had come to dinner, and after the meal was over the family divided into two parties, porch and piano, Adrian's father, with the smile he gave to no one but Matey, having said, "How about a little music?" The others had gone out to the porch chairs and hammocks, to collapse into after-dinner coma and to watch little Priscilla staggeringly practice what Adrian called her "walking steps."

A strange voice sounded from the porch. Glancing out of the window Matey saw mild Cousin Peter Russell, stooped and gray, his rather unattractive, unkempt, sober-faced children clustered about his thin legs. But she did not leave the piano to greet him. Adrian and Aunt Tryntje and Priscilla were surely enough of the family to do the honors, especially for a neighbor whom one saw every day. He had probably stopped in to thank them ceremoniously all over again for taking care of little Mary Ellen last night. The Russells were not Friends, any of them, and Matey had so far acquired Quaker tastes that she was sometimes impatient of Cousin Peter's wearyingly polite insistence on treating each small event decently and in order with conventional formality.

There! The interruption had made her lose the thread of the music. Debussy was hard enough to follow without interruption. She was playing the notes now as though they were words in a language she could pronounce but didn't understand. And Adrian's father hated that. She started over again, forgetting the existence of so negligible a person as Cousin Peter.

Later, delightfully worn out by her struggle with a new musical personality, she joined the outdoor group, rejoicing that she had before her so restful a job as putting the baby to sleep. Looking around she asked, "Where's Priscilla? Writing letters again?"

"No," said Adrian, from where he lay on the grass beside his small daughter, both of them absorbed in watching the maneuvers of a beetle. "No, she went along with the Russells. Little Mary Ellen seems to have taken a shine to her and teased her to go to see—something or other her father has made—a doll-house, wasn't it, Aunt Tryntje?"

"Peter would do well to pay more attention to their buttons and to see that their faces were washed more often and spend less time on doll-houses," said Aunt Tryntje over her knitting. "Those children look like I don't know what. Rebecca says that old colored woman Peter has to take care of them is no better than a dirty slut, but Peter will keep her because she's good-natured."

Matey had been a little surprised that Priscilla did not come back that afternoon till suppertime, and a little more surprised to see her after this so often strolling over to the Russell house or appearing with one of the children beside her. But little Priscilla's reactions were so much more important to her mother than anything else that she paid small attention to the older Priscilla's interest in the Russell children. Up to this time little Priscilla had lived, like all first babies, hermit-like, marooned on the desert island of babyhood in the ocean of grown-up life. Little Mary Ellen Russell, only two years older than she, was the first who ever burst into her silent sea. Matey was so touched by her baby's excited interest in a near contemporary that she welcomed in the three-year-old neighbor without wondering how she happened to be there so often.

In her mind, as in that of any woman just emerging from the physical excitement of bearing and nursing a child, there was a deep-rooted conviction that *her* baby was absolutely different from any other. Mary Ellen was all right, a nice little thing, though her eyes were too close together, and she was sometimes rather noisy and spoiled. But it was obvious that she was made of wholly other stuff than Matey's own child, whose life Matey shared with a literal nearness not unlike that before her birth. When little Priscilla cried—or laughed—or ate—or slept, her mother felt a mystical reflection in the cells of her own body. When Mary Ellen Russell cried, Matey suggested to Priscilla that perhaps it was time for her nap and hadn't she better be taken home?

That Priscilla might not feel the same difference between the two children never occurred to her sister. What did occur to her, with a naïve shock of newness, was the thought that since the baby was so delighted with a playmate, she ought to have a little brother or sister. "Well, Adrian," she said to him one night, when their murmured before-going-to-sleep talk had been of this, "it's simply *laughable* how different I am from what I thought I was! I'm not only simply crazy about you and the baby, but the minute I think of our having another one, I just love him to death, already!"

Before she dropped asleep she said with a drowsy laugh, "Do you remember my saying I thought I couldn't love anything but Sumner?"

"Yes, I remember very well," said Adrian, more distinctly, more awake than she had expected to hear him.

"Doesn't that seem a million years ago—somebody else!" she murmured.

Adrian made no answer. She supposed he had gone to sleep.

Yes, looking back over that summer, Matey could see how it had been nothing but her absorption in her own affairs that had blinded her to what had been openly going on.

"But you didn't see it, either, did you, Adrian?" she challenged him.

"I can't see it now," said Adrian. "Talk about going through the woods to pick up a crooked stick! Not that there's anything crooked about Peter. He's straight, all right, what there is of him. But what on earth does Priscilla want of a gentlemanly old nonentity after the chances she's had!"

Such phrases had been all that came into Matey's mind after Priscilla had exploded her small bombshell. She had been on the point of bursting out, "Oh, *Priscilla!* After all the chances you've had!" But as the words shaped themselves in her mind she saw that they had fallen into a Francis pattern, and was silent. When she was able to speak, she had said guardedly, with a horrid care in choosing her words not to say what she meant, "Well, Priscilla dear, of course I'm surprised. You must have known I would be. I'll have to wait a while before I can really take it in."

Priscilla did not seem to notice her sister's guardedness. She said in a low trembling voice, unlike her own, "I had thought I would never have any children—"

Matey restrained herself with an effort from shouting, "But *these* aren't *your* children!" As she heard these unspoken words Matey did not like the sound of them. And yet how perfectly justified they were!

For the first time since they had begun to talk, Priscilla looked up. With a startled shock Matey thought, "Why, Priscilla never before let me look into her eyes."

"Four little daughters—" murmured Priscilla.

Her face, which Matey had thought set forever in its mechanical brightness, softened into the wavering misty look of young helplessness before emotion. Priscilla looked like a little girl! This was too much. Matey had been as helpless as her sister before the gust of emotion which flung her into Priscilla's arms, crying out, "Oh, darling, darling sister!" her cheeks wet with tears half of sympathy, half of pity, wholly of love.

All through the interval between the announcement of Priscilla's engagement and her marriage, the absent Francis kept Matey from speaking out. But he did far more than that for his younger sister. Her repeated wordless struggles with his standards forced her over and over to take accurate stock of what was in her own mind. Even in thought she could scarcely finish wholeheartedly some of the outcries that came naturally to her lips. "Think of Priscilla, with her professional ability to make good money, drudging her life away taking care of another woman's children." Or "How *crazy* for anybody who's learned to dress so beautifully as Priscilla to bury herself in a place where nobody'll care how she looks." By the time she had begun to put such ideas into words she was again on the railroad platform hearing Francis' unanswerably prudent objections to her own marriage. Time and time again Francis made her draw back, thinking, "No, *this* cannot be the real reason for my heavy-heartedness over Priscilla's marriage."

But although Francis forced Matey to drop one after another of the conventional objections to that marriage, she did not grieve the less over it. Her heart, freed from its meaner cares, ached with all the purer sorrow to see Priscilla, so brilliant, so blonde, so accomplished, beside the listless life-weary man with whom she was to share the rest of her years. Nor was she the more reconciled when she learned that Priscilla and Cousin Peter were to share life only as house-mates, not as man and wife. When Priscilla managed to tell her sister in a shy reticent word or two that her distrust of life had abated only half, that there was to be no question of love or real marriage for her, but only the sharing of another's burden of parenthood, Matey felt a pang that was half passionate relief and half passionate unresignation. "I don't know whether that's better or worse," she told herself wildly.

Nor did the sight of Priscilla's fondness for her foster-children to be (touching as Matey found it) soften in the least her fury of compassion. "She thinks that's all, poor Priscilla!" Matey often thought, watching with a lump in her throat Priscilla's beginnings of motherly ways. She felt for her older sister during those days an almost maternal yearning, as if she were an adult watching a child make an ignorant wrong choice among life's values.

Why this heat about Priscilla's marriage? Whence came the shadow which Matey saw Priscilla unsuspectingly entering? From a light, of course, as every shadow must. And the light streamed, Matey saw it now, from the center of her life with Adrian, from their love, from their union, from their marriage. That was what gave the meaning to every breath she drew. That was what Priscilla would never know. She had hardly known it herself. She had been living in marriage as inattentively as she sometimes played music, striking the mere notes with correctness but making no sense of them. She had been loving Adrian without knowing what she was doing. Somewhere, back of her, lost in the million other insignificant moments of the two years of her marriage, had been the moment when she stopped being a cool shallow child yielding passively to caresses, and had begun to be a woman who loved. This was the moment Priscilla would never pass.

One morning as she made their bed a memory came to her of some of the books she had read in college, some of the lectures to which she had listened. Those childish notebooks of hers, filled with docile notes! Well, thought Matey, beating a pillow to lightness and setting it back, nothing, nothing at all of what she had been told to expect by all those life-experienced elders had turned out true . . . for her. Money had been neither the lock nor the key in her life, and for her, sex had not been the ignoble concession to animality that the older generation by word and gesture and ugly grimace had led her to expect. It had been the foundations of the bridge over which she and Adrian had crossed the unplumbed salt estranging sea of human isolation.

Like the refrain to a litany came her new heartache—Priscilla would live her life out on her island prison, alone.

How strange that it had been her selfless concern for Priscilla which had made her look up from her small busy thoughts and perceive the greatness into which life had led her. Was advance always haphazard, oblique like this? Suppose Priscilla had never made her anxious? Would she have gone on being childish and flat, missing love because she took it for granted?

One Sunday in Meeting, Rebecca was moved to speak. Matey heard nothing but the quotation with which she began. She heard that as if for the first time and always after heard it clad in that velvet Negro voice, "As if a man should cast seed on the earth, and should sleep and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the . . ." Around the words, quiet circles began to widen in Matey's mind. All those older people, set there in her youth to point her to the way ahead, why had they never told her that love could come in any other way than as a flash of lightning comes—comes and blazes and burns and goes? Nothing could possibly be more unlike a stroke of lightning than love as it had come to her . . . like a field of wheat rather, first the blade, then the ear, then the full . . . "Alas! my dear Priscilla will never feed on that harvest."

Late on the afternoon of the next day she sat sewing on buttons and waiting for the baby to wake up. Rebecca's quotation echoed in the small sewing-room—"As if a man should cast seed upon the earth, and it grows, he knoweth not how."

How was it possible the harvest could come to one who so little deserved it? She had but slept and risen, night and day, giving no thought to the seed.

The door opened and Adrian, back from work, stepped in. He looked as for the first time that summer he often looked, rather tired, not very fresh, no longer in his first youth. "Hello, Matey, what makes you look so solemn?" he said, dropping his hat on a chair with a gesture expressing weariness.

("Yes, yes, Ziza!" cried Matey silently across the ocean. "I *am* crazy, crazy, crazy about my husband!")

"Did I look solemn?" she said, laying her work aside. "Well, I was feeling so. I had been thinking what Priscilla is going to miss. . . ."

Adrian's face darkened. He said literally, drily, with none of his usual playful lightness, "Look here, Matey, I'm tired of hearing you go on about that. What do you *think* she's missing? You're hardly in a position to think it's tragic that she won't have much money. Peter Russell's income is about as much as we're likely to have. He lives in as good a house, on the same street. Why isn't hers as good a marriage as yours?"

Matey searched her husband's hard unsmiling face. She was thankful that there was in it no trace of the indulgent patient gentleness which she had seen there in the first days of their marriage. She was past needing indulgence from him now. He would never need to be patient with her any more.

"How can you ask me such a question, Adrian?" she said in a rough low tone.

Her husband paled. "She will have plenty of children to mother," he said. "Isn't that enough?"

With a cry Matey sprang up from her chair. She ran to him, taking his arm in her two hands. She said violently, "No, it's not enough! It's not enough! And you know it! And you needn't pretend I don't know it, either! Don't you ever *dare,* Adrian Fort, to say such a thing to me again!"

They were foolish childish words. No matter! If they did not say what she meant, she would find others that would.

She needed but one other. Adrian shook off her hands with a rough gesture. He held her at arm's length and looked at her. She said his name, *"Adrian!"*

There was no word at all in his answer. He caught her violently to him, no gentleness in his touch.

9

Did they get everything wrong, those cocksure mentors of her youth? Matey often asked herself during the next years of her life. Were *all* their wise sayings mere traditional rules of thumb? That axiom of theirs that the emergence from adolescence is the period when human beings live most intensely—! Why had they not once given her a hint that people might vary in this as in all other matters? Why did they not tell the young people under their charge, so touchingly, helplessly ignorant of what might be before them, something of the infinite diverseness of the paths which lead human beings toward the great moment of conversion to life and faith in it?

Matey in college had "taken" many courses in English literature and "passed" them all. Yet now poetry came to her like a revelation. Why, now she knew what people were talking about when they said those excited exaggerated things about poetry.

One Saturday afternoon she took advantage of Adrian's being at home to play with the baby, and with broom and duster attacked a neglected corner of the attic. On the dusty shelves, among other books from Adrian's college days, was an old volume of Whitman. It fell open in her hand. The bold words on the page leaped up. It was as if this were the first poem she had ever read.

"Oh despairer, here is my neck,
By God! you shall not go down! Hang your whole weight upon me."

She gave a shudder of pleasure.

She turned the pages over and came to "Poem of Wonder at the Resurrection of the Wheat." After a few lines, "Adrian, oh, Adrian, do come up here a minute," she called from the top of the attic stairs. With his solid little girl on his shoulder he came running up to where his wife stood, turbaned by a dusting-cloth, leaning against her broom, the book in her hand. "It's about the earth, the earth we live on," she told him and went on:

"Behold this compost, behold it well!
Perhaps every mite has once formed part of a sick person. Yet behold;—
The grass covers the prairies,
The bean bursts noiseless through the mold in the garden,
The delicate spear of the onion pierces upward.
The resurrection of the wheat appears with pale visage out of its graves."

She looked up at him, chanting:

"The summer growth is innocent and disdainful above all those strata of sour dead."

"Grand!" said Adrian, and "Gosh! Matey, I never knew you could read aloud like that. You make the cold chills go up my back."

"I couldn't for anybody but you," said Matey.

It was not only poetry which thus sprang into life. It was all the visible world with its drama. The sun, moon, and stars, darkness and light, dawn and noonday, came into sight. There had been skies, too, had there not, wherever she had lived before? But with the slowing down of her young pulses her eyes had forgotten that it was not a wood-and-plaster ceiling over her head. No, not wholly forgotten. There had been the night skies to which she had been led by Sumner! The Matey, mother of one child and hoping for another, who stepped out of an evening with her husband for a last look at the stars, held out a hand to the wistful little Matey with her dog.

It was not only beauty which fed Matey's new hungriness for life. Roughness and hardship—yes, even suffering—were part of the banquet spread before her.

One bitter winter night as she and Adrian stepped off the late train from New York (they had been down to hear *The Valkyrie*) they found themselves facing a sudden wild snowstorm. There was nothing to do but to fight their way home on foot from the deserted station through the empty streets.

Afterward Matey could not separate the music from that boisterous battle with night and cold and the screaming wind. She leaned forward against the force of the wind; she clung to Adrian, her head bent to shield her face from the slash of the hard-driven snow; the grinding roar of the storm-tossed ice in the Hudson back of her sounded like the tumult of the orchestra. She could scarely draw breath into her lungs, so smothering was the hand of the tempest on her face, but she shouted in Adrian's ear, "Isn't this *great!*" as, on turning the corner of the Square, they were set upon by the full sweep of the storm.

They buffeted their way forward, stumbling in drifts, wrestling with the storm like Jacob at the ford. Under the piercing cold Matey felt the flame of life in her burn up strong like a blast-furnace under forced draught. Was she the one who was shrieking out the Valkyr *"Ho-yo-to-ho!"* or was it the yell of the tempest? And when half-frozen they staggered up to their door, unlocked it, and found themselves inside, in the incredible quiet of their living-room, warmed and rosy-lighted by the coal fire in the grate, Matey flung her hat in one direction, her coat in the other, and cast herself violently into her husband's arms, crying out, "Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Adrian kindled at her eyes. "Great Scott, Matey, I'm sorry for the folks who aren't married to you!"

Later, as he was brushing his teeth, he remembered that his father had thought her "dry."

"What's the joke?" she called from the next room, and then looking in, "Oh, it's brushing your teeth. It sounded as though you were laughing."

Spring came and went, and drooping under the summer heat, Matey needed all her new-found strength and serenity. Long hours of every day were spent in resisting and succumbing to the physical wretchedness of pregnancy, and then afterward doing hurriedly and with exasperation what she could easily have accomplished in those lost hours. But this vexation, real as it was, blew over the surface lightly. It did not reach the steady warmth within.

Even boredom, perhaps the most difficult of human ills to resist, occupied now but a corner of the spaciousness into which she had stepped out. A new careless fortitude, like a grown-up's attitude toward a child's troubles, sustained her when she went with Aunt Tryntje to the meetings of the D.A.R. and attended those endless committee meetings whose dragging, lagging existence seemed to be a necessary part of running Rustdorf, from the Tennis Club to the District Nursing Association. "They're simply *terrible,*" she reported to Adrian, just as she always had. But she really minded them no more than the slight bother of brushing her hair or lacing up her shoes.

With Adrian she seemed now to be reading out of life a thousand times more of its meaning than she had dreamed could lie on its familiar pages. It was exactly like the change in her reading of music.

One sunny morning, late in November, on the day after the first snow-fall of the year, she went out into the back yard to burn some waste-papers. The three-year-old Petella (this was the version of her name which the little Priscilla had made as soon as she began to talk) was always tagging at her mother's heels like a little dog, and helped carry out the bushel-basket from the woodshed. Together they emptied the crumpled papers upon the cinder-covered corner dedicated to bonfires. It was transfigured now to whiteness by the new-fallen snow. As a treat, Petella was allowed to touch the match to the pile of papers. They took fire with a flash. The child drew back quickly to the shelter of her mother's skirts. The two stood for a moment to watch.

The tongues of flame flared up, their fiery red and orange chastened to transparency by the sunlight. Petella and her mother could see through their shimmering clarity the feather-light cold crystals of the new snow.

The soul of heat . . . the soul of cold . . .

The woman watching them, woven firmly into human life by a thousand blood-ties, felt her imagination soar up on a new wing. Even as she stood there in the body heavy with its double humanity, she caught through those disembodied flames a glimpse of the beautiful, fierce, unhuman life of the elements.

"I visited Saturn and Jupiter and the moon for a moment today," she told Adrian that night at the supper-table, "when Petella and I were burning up waste-papers on the snow."

As she spoke the vision cast a reflection of its brightness up into her rather weary face, shadowed by physical weakness. She too was beginning to show that she was no longer in her first youth.

"Don't get so far away you can't come back to us, dear," said Adrian, his eyes deeply on hers. She thought, "I have seen the soul of heat, and of cold—and now the soul of tenderness."

Petella glanced up from her milk toast in time to catch the interchange of this look. She pushed her plate forward for another helping. "Petella empty like hired man," she said heartily, in an old-time phrase of Aunt Tryntje's.

One of the many changes which these years brought to Matey was an astonishing difference in her feeling about her home. When Adrian's father had first shown them the old house Matey had seen it flatly, literally, as she saw other things, a story-and-a-half stone building with a white-painted clapboarded wing on one end. She had no suspicion that a house could be anything more than a house. The course of her life had moved her in and out of so many houses that she thought she knew how to see one. It had amused her a little to feel so like her mother as she competently examined kitchen, pantry, and plumbing.

After that first inspection of the house the family party of four had strolled about the yards, front and back, Matey, in the haze of golden unreality in which she had wandered through the period of her engagement, listening dreamily to Aunt Tryntje's talk, and dreamily wondering if she were really to be married and live there.

". . . the locusts around the house came from Long Island. All the *English* families planted locusts as house trees. They were thought more elegant than forest trees. The elms in front are of course part of the regular street planting that New Englanders did wherever they settled. The big beech here was planted right after the Revolution by one of the LeRoy cousins back from the war. The LeRoys lived in this house then. He went away a private and came back a colonel, and that's more than any LeRoy of *that* branch has done since. The story was that when he came home from the war his uniform was so full of vermin he wouldn't wear it into the house. He went out into the barn . . . in those days there was a barn standing where the weeping willow in the back yard is now. No, that was the smoke-house stood there. Where *did* the barn stand? Oh, I know, farther back where the stone wall is now. Some of those stones are . . ."

How absurd, how amusing, how quaint Aunt Tryntje was, thought the young Matey—but very dimly, because she was tingling to the touch of Adrian's hand as it brushed hers.

". . . and so they *baked* his uniform in the oven next to the fireplace—it was the kitchen-dining-room then, what thee's going to use as a living-room—and his wife, Henrietta Richmond, she was one of the pi'sen neat Yankee housekeepers, said she never could bear to eat anything in the oven after that, and that was how it came to be bricked up. It's still there, thee knows, under the wall-paper. . . ."

Adrian's eyes were the color of sherry wine when the light shone through them from the side.

"The willow was planted in 1835 by Madeleine Ter Bosch—she was thy great-grandmother's cousin, Matey—because weeping-willows were in fashion then. She'd been down to visit relatives in New York and they were all working weeping-willows in crewel. She brought back the slip from there. But she died before it ever amounted to anything."

At that time all this had been for Matey but a part of Aunt Tryntje's quaintness. To be polite to an old lady she had looked at the trees, but she had certainly not seen them. Why were they now, like the house, like the sky above it, become living personalities? There had always been trees—she supposed—near all the houses she had lived in, but never any more to her than the people who get into the train at one station and get off at the next.

By the time she was expecting her second child, she had taken root beside these trees. The certainty that she would be looking out on this very sky and these very trees to the end of her days deepened her present with overtones of her past and future, making her peaceably one with the old woman she would grow to be, as she was with the adolescent she had outgrown. She felt herself not only a part of Adrian, of the child she had, of the child who was coming, but a part of the piled-up old stones that had sheltered so many other families like hers, part of that old humanized piece of earth, full of root treasures, left there like the traits in her own personality by her predecessors in life. Like her strength, her weaknesses, they had been there before her time and would go on opening out into immortal freshness with each spring. They were all dear to her, the things that grew around the house, from the lilies-of-the-valley to the rhubarb, down to the very blades of vigorous grass, but she came to have a particular affection, a particular intimacy, with the trees. Whenever she turned into her own yard after being away from home they looked themselves to her, unlike other trees as much as she and Adrian were unlike other people.

How differently they took life! The willow was almost a hundred years old, but it had never grown indifferent to the miracle of spring, rushed out to greet it with the same eager, pale-green young welcome, long before its more prudent comrades had stirred from their winter torpor. It was under the willow that Matey had chosen to make Sumner's tiny grave when, a little while before Petella's birth, he had faded out of life.

How differently they acted in thunderstorms! The line of Levantine elms with their dramatic, excited gesturings in the wind, the Nordic oak surly and stiff and insensitive and strong. And the tall old locusts, cut off from self-expression by their height like gentlefolk by their breeding, so that all that could be seen of their emotion in the most violent storm was the slight swaying motion of their long brown trunks.

How differently they stood up under the recurring adversity of winter! On the stormy day in December when Matey lay down on her bed, shuddering in the onset of labor-pains before the birth of her second child, she saw out of the window the old beech, stripped to the poles, magnificently glorying in the battle with wind and snow. She faced her own battle with a new heart. The present, anguish that it was, dwindled to its proper place in the great perspective.

She remembered with pity the faltering panic of her first confinement. The pains were as great now. But she was so much greater.

"No, no! Adrian!" she cried to him, seeing him turn very white at an outcry of hers, his teeth set in his underlip. She beckoned him to her. He came to kneel by the bed. When she could get her breath to speak, "It's worth it!" she told him, with all her heart.

He turned paler than ever, his face transfigured by love and by shared suffering.

Oh, wonder and glory of life that could bring such moments, thought Matey, bracing her soul against the old beech as a new rage of pain swept over her. This too was part of the banquet spread before the living.

When she was up again, later in the month, her new son in her arms, she sometimes held him up at the window through which the beech was to be seen. And on her first outing with her two children, the baby in the baby-carriage, the little sister trudging through the snow beside it, she stopped under the tree and said fancifully, "That's *your* tree, Adrian the fourth." It stood quiet enough, that sunny day, holding up its branches to the winter sun, casting a faint twig-shadow down on the woman with whom it had shared its strength.

Petella gazed up at the tree seriously. The resemblance to her Uncle Francis was particularly marked when she lifted her little fair face. "Oh, dear!" thought Matey with a qualm. "I've made a mistake in saying that. She will not want the baby to have more than she. I must remember, now there are two, not to . . ."

The child trotted through the light snow to the tree. She laid a mittened hand on the great mottled gray bole. "Brother's tree," she said, smiling back at her mother.

"Darling!" cried Matey, falling on her knees in the snow to catch her little daughter to her.

She longed to have had Aunt Priscilla there, to see that smile on that Francis face.

She did share another such moment with Priscilla, later that winter, one day when Aunt Tryntje was telling the children stories. Priscilla had brought her brood to spend a snowy afternoon at Matey's house with paper-dolls. Was it possible, thought Matey, that these were the same children, these rosy, noisy, vital little girls? Could these be the children who, conscious of ugly clothes and ill-cut unkempt hair, had drooped shyly in corners, trying to escape disapproving looks by being invisible?

"Those young ones just wear thee out, Priscilla," said Aunt Tryntje that afternoon, looking at Priscilla's faded radiant face. "It's enough to make a hired man take to his bed to have them always on top of thee like that. Now, children, let your mother alone for a while and I'll tell you a story."

Matey, her baby in her arms, and Priscilla leaning back in peaceful weariness, listened too, although they now knew all of Aunt Tryntje's stories.

"It's about the Colonel LeRoy who was born and brought up in this house, the one whose uniform was baked in the oven downstairs, you know. But this was long before he went to the wars with General Washington. It happened when he was about sixteen, and he was sent to take home across the river an old-maid seamstress who had been working here. Indians never did any harm around here, but across the river things weren't any too settled in those days. Bartholomew was a big fellow then, and rowed the boat across the river all right in good time. They were halfway up the path toward the settlement where the seamstress lived when she remembered she'd left her work-bag in the boat. So Bartholomew LeRoy told her to wait while he ran back for it. He hadn't even got as far as where he'd tied the boat when he heard her scream . . . a scream that fairly shook the leaves on the trees, he always said. . . ."

The little girls at Aunt Tryntje's feet huddled together like startled chicks. Matey asked herself impatiently, "What was I thinking about, to let Petella hear such a story?"

Aunt Tryntje went on, "Bartholomew felt for his knife and started back up the path. He heard her scream again and then, round the corner of the path, men's voices talking Indian talk. He had just time to jump into the bushes and hide when they came along, four Indians and two renegade white men dressed like Indians. They had the seamstress gagged now so she couldn't scream, and they were hurrying her along as fast as she could go, stumbling and tripping on her long skirts. Well, what should the boy do? He couldn't fight six men. What good would it do anybody for him just to go and get captured himself? So he decided to stay safe in the bushes and . . ."

"No, no, *no!*" came shrilly from little Petella. "No, he didn't stay safe! No, he didn't!" She glared at the narrator.

"Why, what does thee *mean,* Petella?" asked Aunt Tryntje in astounded rebuke. "Yes, he did, too."

"*No!*" cried Petella passionately. "He ran right out of doze bushes and went right along with dat lady!"

She began to cry furiously now and rushed to her mother's knee, looking up at her with Francis' face, filled with outraged generous pain.

"Oh, *Matey!*" said Priscilla on a deep note.

"Listen, darling little daughter," murmured Matey in Petella's ear, "it all comes out *quite* nicely in Aunt Tryntje's story. Just let her go on and you'll see." She made room for her beside little Adrian on her lap, while Aunt Tryntje, somewhat ruffled, went on, "Well, of course he *wasn't* to blame" (this with a glance at the still defiant Petella)—"not a bit! And everybody told him so. But he couldn't seem to get over it. I've heard the old people tell how he used to sit right in this room by this window—just sit and sit, his face hidden in his hands. In the spring of that year he disappeared. With nothing but his gun. He was nearly eighteen years old by that time. They didn't have any news of him for about a year. Everybody thought he was dead. And then one day the next April his mother sat on the front stoop out there, churning, and looked up, and there down the road he came, all in ragged old buckskins, thin as the last run of shad, a great scar across his face, but the seamstress was with him . . . all right, though she was looking like a regular squaw with an old . . ."

Priscilla's noisy little girls had been quiet as long as they could, and now began to shout and laugh and clap their hands and turn somersaults on the rug.

"Thee *sees*, Petella," said the old lady triumphantly.

But Petella had quite forgotten the story and her remote kinsman. These were the first somersaults she had ever seen. She gazed at them fascinated, and scrambling down from her mother's lap, began clumsily to try to imitate her foster-cousins.

Priscilla's husband came in now, stamping the snow from his feet, and calling out to the children that he'd got the biggest sled and was going to pull them all home on it. Cousin Peter was almost as much changed as his little girls, thought Matey, noting his sleek look and the animated expression on his mild face.

"If you'll let me have that pattern for the baby's cloak," said Priscilla, rising to go, "I can get it cut out and basted by to-morrow. Peter is going to be at lodge meeting this evening."

But it no longer made any difference what Priscilla *said*.

10

IN THOSE very first lean years, when Adrian's salary as bookkeeper was too small to mention and the house needed everything, the interest on Aunt Connie's money had melted uninterestingly, each half year, into mattresses and chairs and a new furnace and tiny expensive woolen baby shirts, and taxes and doctor's bills. But by 1913, the fifth year of their marriage, Adrian had become teller at eighteen hundred a year, and the house was moderately well furnished. "Let's save it all up this year and buy a Ford!" said Matey daringly. There were but few automobiles owned in Rustdorf as yet, and mostly by people who had much more money than the Forts.

"Everybody'll think we're crazy," said Adrian, "buying a car before we either of us own a fur coat. Let's."

So they did. And with its purchase in the spring of 1914 they went for a time ridiculously back to the joys of childhood and venturesomely forward into unexplored emotions of the future, as no generation before them did, nor after them can ever do. To be transported through the air at the speed of light by merely wishing it will not so astonish and ravish the *blasé* generations of the future as to be whirled along familiar roads at four times the speed of a trotting horse astonished and ravished the generation to which, in maturity, the automobile was new. The very process of learning to drive the contraption was an adventure. There were no driving instructors in those days. The Ford agent from whom Adrian bought the car took him out on the road once, gave him a lesson in the use of the pedals, exhorted him above all to remember where his emergency brake was, and told him to go to it. On a back road, Matey perched on the bank, Adrian went to it, perspiring from every pore. "I haven't felt the pit of my stomach come up so, not since I was three years old and starting to slide down the banisters the first time," he told his wife, halting the infernal machine with difficulty and wiping streams of sweat from his scarlet face.

As a rule now Matey took Adrian for granted, but the idea did come into her head that it was not Francis who would have allowed a witness to watch his fumbling unheroic struggles with a new power. "It's awfully nice of you, Adrian," she told him, leaning down from her refuge on the bank, "to let me come along."

But Adrian, naturally, did not know what she was talking about. "I need you to pick up the *membra disjecta,*" he told her, bringing himself with a visible effort to let the clutch in again and start off. "Let me see, turn on a little more gas, press on the left pedal, take your foot off the . . ."

When, a week or so later, Adrian first drove out his wife and children, their excitement was almost as great as his. Petella, at five, was considered old enough to sit on the front seat beside her father. Matey sat in the back, clasping the small Adrian tightly to her. "Are you planning to use him as a cushion to fall on?" asked Adrian as he climbed over the side into the driver's seat. "Looks like it. Petella, how'll thee and I do that? Will thee fall on me, or I on thee?" Petella laughed and relaxed her grasp on the side of the seat which had been in imitation of her mother's tensity. Matey laughed too and set the fat two-and-a-half-year-old boy down on the seat beside her, one arm around him.

"Release the emergency, press on the left pedal, raise the foot from the . . ." murmured Adrian prayerfully. And they were off.

In the first months of their car-ownership, Matey and Adrian, along with other responsible family people of their generation, were carried away by an exquisitely childlike delight in a brand-new kind of fun. They swept Priscilla along with them. Seeing Petella and little Adrian as rapt over the Ford as their parents, she coveted it for her own little girls. Adrian told Matey, "She'll never get Peter Russell to take money out of the savings-bank to buy a *car*. He's as Hudson valley Dutch as if his name were Van der Poel."

But all Priscilla's dammed-up life-forces were now pouring along the channel they had found. Nothing, not even Dutch blood, could withstand her determination that her little girls should have whatever other children enjoyed for their own good. The Forts bought their Ford in April of 1914. In May Peter Russell came to the savings-bank to draw out the sum of $795, a sum as closely associated in that year with the idea of a Ford as two cents is associated with the idea of a postage stamp.

"Goody! Goody!" said Matey, when Adrian came home from the bank with this piece of news. "Good for Priscilla!"

She never did, as a matter of fact, overcome the physical terro which her timid elderly husband felt (along with the majority of his generation) for the unholy speed of automobiles. She never succeeded in persuading him to learn to drive. So she herself learned to drive long before Matey did, one of the first women in Rustdorf to sit behind a steering-wheel. Adrian said it must be the sporting blood that used to show in her tennis (which she had now entirely given up), coming out in a new form. But by this time Matey knew very well that Priscilla had never had a drop of sporting blood.

"Both you girls are perfectly crazy with the heat," Francis told them jovially when, on one of his infrequent visits, he learned about their Fords. "*I* can't afford a car!"

"You could afford a Ford!" said Matey, using a pleasantry which was still young and unwrinkled in those days.

"Oh, *I'd* just as soon ride in a Ford as not," he told them generously, "but Emily has one of these fool prejudices against them. She says she wouldn't be caught dead in one."

This energetic statement did not sound at all to Priscilla and Matey like their effaced young sister-in-law whom they had seen only twice in Francis' between-train visits in Rustdorf. They did not even need, now, to look at each other to know that this impression was common to them both.

It was extraordinary, thought Matey, how her Gilbert blood pursued her. From that day on she was, under the surface, a little deprecatory about their having a Ford and not a more expensive car. She joined with cowardly haste in the jokes made about its cheapness and was not too glad to be seen in it by the wealthy people on the estates round about, with most of whom she had now a nodding acquaintance.

Nothing, however, could mar her enjoyment of it when the wheels were really going around on one of their drives, long, *long* drives of forty or forty-five miles. Like every one else who owned a car for the first time, it became their occupation. They drove and drove and drove. Up the river to Poughkeepsie and beyond to Rhinebeck, where none of them had ever been, though they had passed through it a thousand times on the train. South nearly to within sight of New York. Inland toward Pawling and Amenia, along the boundaries of what Aunt Tryntje still called the Great Nine Partners and The Little Nine Partners and the Rombout Patent, exploring roads known till then only by farmers.

One clear June evening when at the end of a late drive they drew up in front of their house and happened to find Adrian's father there on the sidewalk, Matey knew from the amused expression on his face that they were all four wearing naïvely happy smiles. "Yes, we've gone back to our infancy," she called to him.

"It never did take much of a straw to tickle me, you know," admitted Adrian.

It was the twenty-ninth of July, and too hot for anything in the late afternoon. Too hot even for the Ford.

"She'd boil her old head off," said Adrian.

"Mercy, yes, and we'd have to wear stockings if we went out," murmured Matey.

They sat on the porch, which Aunt Tryntje faithfully called the stoep. It faced east, so that the scorching splendor of the sun setting over the Hudson behind them wreaked its fury on the back windows of the house. But it was quite hot enough in front. Matey wondered how Adrian, after a day's work at the bank, could have the energy to pretend to be interested in Petella's struggle with her reader. It was at least her five hundredth try at the everlasting story of the Little Red Hen. Matey reached up idly to pick off a dead leaf from the vine over her head, enjoying the elasticity of her muscles. Heavens! how alive she was at thirty-three compared to what she had been as a girl! "Did I remember to tell you, Adrian," she asked drowsily, "that Ziza has another baby? I had a letter from Mme. Vinet yesterday."

"A girl, I should hope, this time," said Adrian, tightening his arm around his own little daughter.

"Another boy," said Matey. "They're going to name him Henri for Ziza's father."

"But the hen said to the duck, 'No, you did not help me with the corn. Now you shall not have any of the bread,' " read Petella with wonderful fluency, adding in the same breath, "But I know that part by heart, Father, that's not really reading it."

This seemed so natural a statement to Adrian that he evidently did not notice it. But Matey gave an inaudible hail back over the years to Aunt Connie, who had watched another little girl, and blew an invisible kiss toward the top of Petella's Francis-golden hair.

"And the turkey said," went on Petella, adventuring stumblingly into new worlds, " 'Let me have some of that nice bread!' But the hen said, 'No, you did not help me with the corn. Now you shall not have any of the nice—' " Wasn't she the mean old thing!" said Petella indignantly.

"But she'd done all the work," advanced her father.

"She might have let them have a taste!" said Petella, shutting up the book.

"Mme. Vinet writes that Ziza doesn't seem like herself," said Matey, although she knew that Adrian was only moderately interested in these details, "doesn't seem to get up as well as she ought."

"How old is her first boy?" asked Adrian.

"Oh, he's as old as Petella almost, born in 1909, just as she was. No, it can't be any effects left over from that confinement. Mme. Vinet says it seems almost like a lack of nervous energy. Ziza seems sort of discouraged, doesn't want to get up."

"That doesn't sound much like the live-wire Ziza you've always described to me," commented Adrian, "nor like the way she seemed that day at La Ferté. I should have said motive-power was the last thing she didn't have enough of!"

"Oh, it can't be anything serious," said Matey.

"Where's Brother?" inquired Petella, bored by her parents.

"Under his tree, in the sandpile."

"May I take a piece of candy from Padre's box?"

"Yes."

"And one to take to Brother?"

"Yes." Matey's answers were no more than murmurs, but she was not too drowsy to smile at the picture Petella made, hanging over the candy-box, deliberating soulfully which two pieces to take. Her golden head drooped in the pose of a pre-Raphael angel, her half-open lips took on a seraphic curve. "I believe the ones with nuts are the best," she said thoughtfully, at last.

After she had gone her mother sank dreamily down below the surface of the ocean of well-being. The late summer afternoon was compounded of all golden elements of peace. It was after working-hours, it was midsummer, it was Rustdorf, it was home. The locusts sang with all their might and the dark silent trees listened gravely. From around the corner of the house came a murmur of children's voices. "How well they get on together," observed Adrian, "and isn't it heaven's own mercy there are two of them to amuse each other." He added in an ecstasy of inertia, "Do you suppose if I tried I could get as far as to the hammock?"

"I'm sure I couldn't," said Matey, closing her eyes.

"Why move when you're perfectly all right as you are?" Adrian admonished himself. And to his wife, "Honest, Matey, could anybody *be* more perfectly all right—and surer of it? There isn't anything that *could* happen to us—except one of us dying."

"Nothing," agreed Matey.

She relaxed still more, leaning with all her weight on the fabric, firm at last, of life around her, partaking effortlessly of the sun's dynamic force, of the rooted strength of the trees, of the children's young affection, of Adrian's love.

She had enough.
Everything was all right.
In her mind the two thoughts were one.

PART THREE

I

INTO this beatitude came Adrian's father, an open newspaper in his hand. As he walked up the path toward the house, Matey began calling out to him in a lazy protest. "Don't expect a note of music from me this hot evening, Padre! I've just been telling Adrian I haven't energy e—"

Adrian's father had reached the porch now and at the sight of his face Matey stopped in the middle of a word.

"What's happened now, Father?" asked Adrian sharply.

His father held out the newspaper. Two headlines of equal size stood out boldly. Matey's eye caught the wrong one first, "No Swine to be shown at County Fair," and after a bewildered glance at her father-in-law, looked at the other. "French troops being concentrated along the frontier."

"What's that?" she asked, jumping up and snatching the paper from him. She stared at the words, believing her eyes as little as if she had seen the old beech walking across the lawn. "Not *French* troops!" she cried. She had been very busy with raspberry jam for the last few days and had not taken time to glance at the papers.

Neither Adrian nor his father replied. Over her shoulder Adrian was silently devouring the scanty telegraphic news on the front page.

"But *France* hasn't anything to do with that quarrel between Austria and Serbia," protested Matey indignantly.

"Russia's started or getting ready to start, you see," said Adrian's father to his son. Something in his tone told Matey that the two men had decidedly not been missing the paper lately. Her father-in-law put his finger on a subhead, "Czar's troops wreck bridge."

"My *God!*" said Adrian, who seldom swore. The two men looked at each other.

For the first time since her marriage, Matey felt what she had heard other wives speak of, the chill of being ignored.

"Still," said the older, "you notice this." He pointed out a smaller head-line, "Wall Street easier." They seemed much closer to each other than to her.

"Yes, *that's* a darn good omen," said Adrian. "I can't believe it is anything but a scare."

Matey drew a long breath of relief. "Of course it's only a scare," she told them impatiently. "What are you thinking about, to imagine for a minute that modern European nations are going to war! Why, Adrian, don't you remember, when we were in Louvain with Ziza and the Conacqs, how everybody was singing 'l'Internationale'? Ziza's husband said it was much more like their own national anthem than the real one."

"That day of the picnic at Namur they showed us some all-fired big frontier fortifications," Adrian reminded her.

But Matey had recovered her poise. "Oh, of course it won't come to anything. It can't," she said. She looked at the paper again. "I suppose if the French troops really are maneuvering toward the frontier, little Paul Vinet's with them. He's in the last months of his military service, you know. Mme. Vinet and Henri will be wild till the scare is over and they have him back. They hover over that boy like a couple of old hens."

"The Belgians—Ziza's husband may be called out, too, perhaps," said Adrian.

"Oh, that *would* be serious!" admitted Matey.

The next day's paper reported, "Austrians in first battle, one thousand killed." This was not to Matey's purpose. She ran her eyes hastily down the column, impatient for other news. There was no mention whatever of France or Belgium. "You *see!*" she told Adrian triumphantly, as if it had been a perverse idea of his that there might be war.

After the children were in bed that night Adrian's father and Aunt Tryntje came over and sat on the porch with the "young people." They were both rather subdued. "The news in the paper brings back the War of the Rebellion," said Aunt Tryntje.

For the first time Matey heard that her father-in-law had run away from home at sixteen in the second year of the Civil War.

"Why, I thought Quakers didn't . . ." began Matey, surprised.

"Not as a *soldier!*" cried Aunt Tryntje and Adrian and his father, all speaking together. Aunt Tryntje added, "As a stretcher-carrier. And there was talk of reading him out of Meeting for that!"

Matey measured from the sharpness of their correction the intensity of their Quaker horror of war and felt a little nettled. They needn't think that Friends were the only ones who knew that war was barbarism. All moderns did.

Aunt Tryntje was launched on a reminiscence, one which Matey had not heard before. "I'll never forget how thee looked to us, Adrian, when thee came back. The Rustdorf boys were to come, Matey, by boat, up from New York, after they were mustered out there, and were to be at the dock here at three in the afternoon. The whole town was there. Everybody. I remember we borrowed a wheel-chair and took thy grandfather down, Adrian. All sorts of preparations had been made to celebrate. Our Rustdorf boys had been in the thick of everything!—at the Devil's Den at Gettysburgh and—"

"Never mind all that," said Adrian's father in a muffled voice.

"Well, everybody wanted to do them honor, you can imagine. Most of the band were away in the army, but some of the old fellows who'd stopped playing long ago got out their old uniforms and tuned up. The school-children had been drilled in a patriotic song. The little girls up to the fourth grade were all in white, dressed with red-white-and-blue sashes, and every one of them had a bouquet of flowers. The Seminary boys had torches, ready for a torchlight procession as soon as it got dark. The returned soldiers were to march up the hill to the Square, hear an address of welcome, and disband. Mercy! How excited we were.

"Well, half-an-hour ahead of time we were all there on the landing. But the boat didn't come. Not a sign of it. The school-children practiced their songs. The little girls shifted their bouquets from one hand to the other. Finally the word was passed around that they would not come till next day. So we all went home.

"But some of the big boys sat up at the end of the pier to keep watch, and along about two in the morning didn't they see the boat all lighted up, swinging around the corner of the river, by the Danzkammer. They put out up the hill as fast as they could lay foot to the ground and roused the town. In about a minute, seems though, every house in town was blazing with lights. People scrambled out of bed and got into their clothes double quick. The Seminary boys grabbed their torches and lighted them as they ran down the hill. The little girls took their bouquets out of the water where they'd been put to keep them fresh. And away we all went to the landing again. I'd been grown up for a good many years, but it was the first time in all my life I'd been outdoors after midnight. I remember how queer it seemed.

"The boat was pretty close then, drifting in without any noise. We could make out people passing back and forth on the deck in front of the lighted windows. My! how black and still the Hudson looked! Our band struck up, sort of quavery. The boys with torches formed a double line and we crowded up close behind them. The boat slid up and bumped a little against the landing. A couple of deck-hands jumped off with a rope and made her fast. The gangplank went down with a bang. We heard a loud voice give a command. And two by two, shoulder to shoulder, they began to march past us—what was left of the men who had been boys when—when we—last—saw—"

For some words Aunt Tryntje's voice had been trembling. It now stopped altogether. She wiped her eyes, blew her nose resolutely, and went on, "Well, we didn't have any more of that celebration." She turned to Adrian's father. "Does thee remember, Adrian, how the band stopped playing . . . first one instrument and then another . . . I can see thy face now just as I saw it then." Her voice failed. She tried again. "I wish I could forget it!" . . . This time she did not go on at all.

After a silence, "Well, what *did* you do," asked Matey, "if you didn't carry out the celebration?"

"Everybody cried," said Aunt Tryntje, "that was all. Everybody cried."

"Why in the world did you cry, *then*," asked Matey, "when you had them safe back?"

The older people did not answer her.

From now on Matey did not omit to read the newspaper on account of raspberry jam. On August first the *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise* informed her that Germany and Russia had broken and that the price of Ford cars was to be cut. One piece of news was about as interesting to her as the other. What did she care about abstract ideas like Germany and Russia? Little Paul Vinet was not in the Russian army, was he? nor was Ziza's passionately loved husband in the German. The Vinets were always in her thoughts. She kept trying to imagine where they all were. Was Mme. Vinet still in Louvain with Ziza? No, by this time she must be back in Paris with Henri.

The second of August was a Sunday. Newspapers were not delivered in Rustdorf on Sundays, and Matey, though the day seemed endless, would not acknowledge her anxiety enough to ask Adrian to go down to the station to buy one from a train.

On Monday, August third, she read in the headlines that "Great Britain orders mobilization" and that French troops had fought with Uhlans at Petit Croix. Where was Petit Croix? Where was Polo? She turned the page over and read, "It is expected that France will declare war within a few hours." "Adrian! Adrian! It's not possible!"

But Adrian was not there. He had gone to work as usual. Everything went on as usual. Most people were much more interested in the cut in the price of Fords than in anything else, except a recurrence of an old hope of paving Washington Street. Matey laid down the paper and went about her own usual work. It was time to get the children in from play, washed, fed, and to bed. Brother addressed himself whole-heartedly to his food, but Petella asked, as she often did, for a story of "when you were a little girl, Mother," and Matey told them about a jolly baby she had played with in France, "the first baby I was ever acquainted with," she said. "I was like one of his big sisters, you know. He used to play peekaboo with us. And even then he always played fair and kept his eyes shut."

She fed and undressed her children, with a kiss she tucked them up in their safe soft beds, she left them, and going out into her own bedroom, stood for a long time, one hand at her temple, staring at the floor, remembering Polo . . . how he had enjoyed Adrian's fun on that last visit.

The day went by. Matey varied between determined incredulity and moments of sudden physical sickness such as she had when she was pregnant.

Belgium refused to allow passage to the German troops.

"They're crazy!" said Adrian to his father.

"What else could they do!" he answered. "That was one of the terms of the neutrality treaty. They signed that."

On the day after that, Matey read, "Belgian troops marching to frontier."

All day she heard them marching.

That night she woke up with a cry.

"What is it?" asked Adrian. He flashed on the electric light. Matey, sitting up in bed, stared around the familiar room wildly. "Oh, a dream," she said.

She lay down again. Adrian turned out the light. She had thought she heard Ziza's voice screaming.

In the morning she asked, "Adrian, how quickly you woke up! You had that light on instantly."

"I wasn't asleep," said Adrian. "I was wondering where *le petit* Marceau is. He has three children now."

And then began the advance into Belgium. How long did it last? It lasted till the end of Matey's youth. Day after day the headlines read, "Liège battle still on," "Liège forts still holding," "Germans still held up at Liège." Matey resolved that she would not again read a single word of the bloody description of the attack and defense, and every day read all of them. Liège fell. The headlines then read, "Belgians retreating on Antwerp."

It was August 20. A letter from Mme. Vinet arrived. Matey wildly tore it open. It was a pleasant chatty letter, full of her return to Paris, how hot the train had been, and Henri had had the hall papered during her absence. She knew Matey would like the new paper, of which she inclosed a sample. Ziza's new baby was sweet, looked just as Polo had when . . .

Matey looked wildly at the date—July 21. It had been almost a month on the way.

On August 24 the first account of German atrocities in Belgium was printed in the paper. Matey burned like a torch. Adrian's father said gravely to his son, "War's always the same."

Matey was furious. Partly because he would not talk to her. "You don't mean to say, Padre," she flared at him, "that our American men in the Civil War . . ."

He looked at her strangely, an expression on his face she had never seen there before. "Oh, there's no use talking about it," he said, turning away.

That afternoon there was a regular meeting of the Rustdorf D.A.R. chapter. It was Aunt Tryntje's turn to entertain them.

(They were mostly old ladies, friends of hers.) Matey went across the Square to help out with the refreshments.

She found Aunt Tryntje turning over the pages of the immense album in which she kept old photographs. "I got to thinking about Adrian, thy Adrian's father, in the war," she explained over her shoulder as Matey came in. "I thought I had a photograph of him in his stretcher-carrier's uniform, but I can't find it."

Matey went to look over her shoulder. "Who's that man?" she asked, pointing to the photograph of a bare-headed, bearded soldier standing in front of a tent.

"That's General Grant."

Matey looked into the tragic eyes of the old photograph. "It's *dreadful!*" she murmured. "I never saw such a sad face in my life."

"It was taken during the Battle of the Wilderness," said Aunt Tryntje.

She turned over the page. In the moment before she turned another, Matey caught a glimpse of half a dozen faded photographs of battle scenes. Corpses in uniforms, scattered sand bags, thrown-down rifles lay scattered about the trenches. But these dead men did not shock her. They did not look real. Either they were so peacefully relaxed that they looked enviably asleep, or they were in grotesque and impossible attitudes so that they looked like nothing but badly stuffed rag dolls. They did not horrify her half as much as the steady patient misery in the eyes and on the lips of Grant.

"No, I can't find that photograph of Adrian," said Aunt Tryntje, shutting the book.

"I've brought over some of those thin wafers," said Matey, "to serve with the lemonade. Rebecca made an extra lot the last time she was at the house."

"They'll be nice," said Aunt Tryntje.

Life slid forward in its usual grooves. Not another word had come from the Vinets, any of them. The papers reported civilian mail delayed. Where could they all be? Had Ziza escaped to Paris with her children? No, Matey did not see her in the crowds of refugees reported by the newspapers. Ziza would never leave her husband. *"Je suis folle, folle, folle de mon mari!"* cried Ziza again to her old comrade. With perfect distinctness Matey now saw Ziza coming and going in the well-remembered pretty little Belgian suburban villa and felt herself sicken in the suspense which must be beating wildly in Ziza's breast.

"Come, come, this is hysterical," thought the Matey who was sewing on the porch of her comfortable home, the locusts singing the old trees to sleep outside, her own children and Priscilla's little girls playing pussy-wants-a-corner with an astonishing degree of noisiness. "This is melodramatic nonsense. I've lost my nerve. After all, this is the twentieth century, *voyons!*" (Her thoughts came to her often in French in those days.) "There are trains and telephones and automobiles. And noncombatants are never involved in a modern war. Ziza's husband is older than mine, past military age. Only the young men with the colors will be expected to take part in a war. Adrien Conacq has probably long ago piled his wife and babies into their little motorcycle and side car and trundled them away from Louvain to Paris to stay with Mme. Vinet till this preposterous business is over." Ziza's American sister-friend looked up from her darning, calmed and reassured. Along the outdoor frieze flashed the spokes of the newsboy's bicycle. He reached his hand into the brown canvas bag slung on his handle-bars. Riding with both hands free for an instant he folded an *Evening Enterprise* into a hard-twisted baton, and with a practiced gesture slung it far into the Forts' front yard.

Matey walked out over the hot grass to pick it up.

"Mother, can we put on our bathing-suits and play with the hose?" asked Petella from the side yard.

"Yes, if you want to," said her mother absently, unrolling the paper. Halfway down the front page, among longer telegraphed dispatches, were two lines which read, "Louvain wiped out. Its civilian population has almost ceased to exist."

2

EXCEPT for Adrian and his father, Matey now felt herself in the midst of perfect strangers, almost on a strange planet. Priscilla, as ever, was absorbed in her convert's fanaticism. As long as her little daughters had what they needed and were happy . . . ! And the others, these Rustdorf men and women, what could they be made of to go about as usual, cold and self-centered and hideously indifferent to suffering and death? They read the war news, it is true, they commented on it —she shuddered to hear the comments they made. They complained of the difficulty of pronouncing those queer-looking foreign names or even of remembering what they were from day to day. They said, "I see the French government was moved to Bordeaux yesterday. Looks as though Paris was a goner, doesn't it? Isn't it terrible! My! Aren't we lucky to be out of it! I wish you'd save me some of the seed from those pansies, they're like some we used to have years ago." Matey loathed the sight of them, shallow, vegetating provincials . . . feeling herself of a superior race. She tried to cable Mme. Vinet for news of Ziza—had she left Louvain in time?—and was told it was impossible to guarantee the arrival of any telegram with a French destination. No letter came. "Germans only forty miles from the capital," said the headlines. Matey sat up till all hours, reading. She read straight through page after page of the Encyclopaedia, wherever she chanced to open a volume, and never knew afterward which ones they had been. Every day now, if the newsboy who brought the Poughkeepsie paper was at all later than his usual time, she went down to the train which brought the afternoon papers from New York. On September 7 she was late. The papers were in. People stood about, reading. Matey pounced on the nearest man to her, the elderly owner of the iron factory. "Mr. DuBois!" she cried, "What's the news?"

He lowered his paper and looked at her absently, recalling his mind from his reading with an effort. Then, "Ah, Mrs. Fort," he said, smiling. "How do *you* do, these days? Children all well, I hope."

She was incapable of answering him. Her question reached his ear. "The news?" he said vaguely, and then, "Oh, yes, yes, Paris, of course. I hadn't looked yet." Matey saw that he had been reading the financial page. Now he did look. "Not taken yet," he told her. He added gravely, with a deacon's intonation, "How thankful we Americans should be to have no connection with all that."

The next day the newsboy brought the afternoon paper early. Matey caught it from his hand, her heart standing still to see on the first page enormous headlines, the biggest, the blackest she had ever seen, three times as large as any *The Enterprise* had used before. They danced and wavered before her eyes. It had come. Mme. Vinet too . . .

She held the paper off, trying to steady herself to read. But the words were not "Paris taken." No, not at all. Matey made them out now. Like a startled yell they rang out from the paper:

POUGHKEEPSIE MAN SLAIN!

Among the lists of German soldiers killed in a battle with the Russians was, it seemed, the name of a man who had lived in Poughkeepsie for a time before going back to Germany; a man people had known; a real man, who only now had been walking down Market Street like anybody. And he was dead. Killed. In broad daylight he had been thrust through with a bayonet by a man he had never even seen before.

POUGHKEEPSIE MAN SLAIN!

shrieked the horrified printed voice, and all the Hudson valley woke to the knowledge that murder was being done.

Before even she looked to see the news from Paris, Matey was pierced as by a bayonet by her first deep intuitive understanding of something not personal to her. For an instant she saw that Rustdorf people were acting as they did according to a universal law—not because they were bad or inhuman, not even because they were indifferent but because they did not see what was happening. As soon as ever they saw—!

But how was it possible that human beings could fail to see such events? The rebuking answer to that question lay written large in her own thick-skinned indifference to the "thousand Austrians killed!" Could Mr. DuBois himself be any more stone and ice to human agony than she? She began to understand what lies at the base of cruelty.

The instant of vision flashed and disappeared as her other first guesses at reality had come and gone. Her eyes leaped over the corpse of the slain Poughkeepsie man and ran hurriedly through the telegrams, looking for news of Paris.

On September 9 the headlines reported, "Germans forced to change plans."

On September 10 came the news of the battle of the Marne. And a letter from Mme. Vinet.

3

THE children were scuffling in the next room. Matey could hear some sort of heated discussion going on. But lively tilts between them were not uncommon. Petella was devoted to her little brother, but she often found him exasperating and contrary-minded, and he on his side was often wrought to frenzy by her big-sister attempts to bring him up. Their mother took this for one of such encounters, not serious, a mere part of the process of settling down to live together. She continued to rush about feverishly cleaning the dining-room (the third time that week) and paid no attention to them till she heard Petella's voice saying urgently, "No, *honest!* Brother, don't call her. *I'll* buckle it for you. She feels so bad—*you* know!—that baby she used to play peekaboo with . . . Let *me* do it for you!"

Matey stopped short. Where had Petella heard that? Did children know everything you tried to hide? She thought she had hidden from the children not only the news of Polo's death but all her fever of sorrow and anger and alarm. She had carefully come and gone about the house as usual, she had played with the children, she had sung to them. (But, oh! not the old French nursery songs she had sung with Polo and Ziza!) She had kept a rigid grimace of cheerfulness on her face. She had been doing her duty, she thought, by keeping them shut out of her real life, by pushing them outside her door.

She had forgotten that she was Petella's mother and not her nurse and caretaker. But Petella had not forgotten. Matey began helplessly to cry. To think that her baby girl had been sorry for *her!* She knew that Petella had heard her and had pushed the door open. But she did not stop. She stood in the middle of the floor, her hands over her face, the first tears she had shed for the murdered Polo streaming down her face. She heard the child come in and felt about her knees the pressure of short arms, squeezing earnestly. She sat down on the floor and took her little girl into her arms, weeping more than ever—but not wholly now from sorrow.

Very dimly, calling in a faint voice from far in the past, came the question—had *her* mother, to protect her, shut her out so from her real life? And she had not known how to find her way in, like Adrian's deep-hearted little daughter. She had only run away to play—like Francis.

They cried a little while, Petella and her mother, hugging each other very hard, and ten minutes after, Petella had shed it from her five-year-old mind and was arguing with Brother about whose turn it was for a ride on the kiddie-car. Her mother was working again, but not so hysterically, capable now of noting the inimitably wheedling tone of Brother's soft little voice. He was once more getting around Petella.

During those days of suspense Matey could do nothing but work. There was not, she felt, work enough in the world to occupy her. "No, Rebecca, leave that. I'll do it," she said over and over. She could not bear her piano. A note struck by chance on it by the children made her wince. She could not bear to go to Meeting. She had never found in the Quaker "silences" more than quiet and rest and occasionally a vague but comforting sense of a greater, more powerful current of life in which she was sharing. Now those long pauses were filled with sights and sounds which appalled her. Incessant activity of the most primitive kind was the only screen between her and the sight of Paul Vinet as his mother saw him in the hospital where he died, armless, blinded, mutilated beyond her recognition—little Polo! the harmless, lovable boy . . . It was almost with a recurrent cry that she sprang upon scrubbing-brush and broom to shield herself from that sight. But she only sprang into a wave of terrified surmise about Ziza and her children. It was almost worse not to know what had happened to them than to know as with Polo. At least he lay in his grave, safe from further tortures. Not a word had reached Mme. Vinet from Ziza. Henri's summons had come, he had joined his regiment and perhaps now lay on a battlefield—Matey thought, "like one of those tumbled corpses in Aunt Tryntje's photographs"—Mimi's husband, obese and middle-aged, was with the reserves, who were digging trenches all across the north of France. Mimi was to stay with her boys in the house at La Ferté-en-Valois to do what she could to keep the business together. "La Ferté of course, so far to the interior, is perfectly safe." So wrote Mme. Vinet in mid August. By the time Matey read the letter, La Ferté too had been engulfed and swept down to the abyss. Had Mimi left in time? Had she been caught like Ziza? Where were those little rosy boys of hers? Mimi had not Ziza's vitality. She never would survive a great shock.

"Petella, is that the mailman?" her mother called out a dozen times a day. In the midst of her restless misery it comforted her that she did not need to keep a company face for Petella.

Another letter came. Petella stood by anxiously, halving her mother's fright by sharing it. Matey raced through the first page and sent her daughter away happy with the news that the little boys who lived in La Ferté were all right. Yes, Mimi had been caught by the tide of invasion, had lived through the passage of the Germans' advance and retreat. The house had been ransacked and fouled, some of the furniture had been carried away, but no harm done to Mimi or the little boys beyond a week of deadly fear and venomous hate. Mimi was sticking it out in La Ferté to try to keep the business going. Most of the workmen were mobilized, of course, but she was looking up the older ones. Her oldest boy was thirteen, old enough to help her a little at the factory.

At the factory! The soft, well-served, domesticated Mimi trying to understand business accounts! Soiling her white fingers with machinery! Mimi, who had never been able to endure with steadiness even the most sheltered life. It was unthinkable to Matey. "Mimi writes that she must save what she can out of the wreck for her children's future," wrote Mme. Vinet. ("Of course Mimi would feel so. Any mother would," said Priscilla when Matey read this letter to her.)

Mme. Vinet had not in the least given Ziza up in spite of the terrible silence from Louvain. She wrote: "I can feel that she is still alive. And if she is, as soon as she can escape she will come home. I hear her knocking as soon as I drop off to sleep. Last night I sprang out of bed and ran to open the door three or four times. I must not leave the apartment for more than an hour at a time. She may come at any moment. Providentially the government has declared a moratorium on rents. If I had to pay rent I should not be able to stay here. Henri's salary has stopped, of course. Mimi's husband is practically ruined. I have no music lessons—oh, what a chaos of mean and tragic miseries, my Mété!"

At the end of this letter, "We can't be thankful enough, can we, Matey, that *our* children are safe and all right," said Priscilla earnestly.

4

ALONG with all the rest of the world, Matey passed into the next phase—the phase when nothing different happened—into a state of suspended animation in which it seemed at first she could not live another day, a condition which all wise experts, financial, political, military, economic, said could not last another day, and which lasted on, week after week, month after month.

Henri still lived. During the first period of maladjustment in the army he had been put back into the place in the regiment—in the line, as a common soldier—which had been his years before, as a young man during his military service. He had gone through three battles, receiving "only" a slash in the face, which was superficial and treated on the field. Now, as some glimmerings of order began to appear, he had been assigned to semi-clerical work; at the front, but not actually in the trenches, not charging with a bayonet. Adrian had had word from *le petit* Marceau, his old comrade. He had long ago, as completely as Adrian, given up painting for bourgeois life, and earned a comfortable living as a traveling salesman for a large silk manufactory in Lyons. Like Henri he had been sent at first into the front-line troops, but was now, like other men past thirty, transferred to "lighter" service. In his case it was carrying stretchers along the front lines, to pick up wounded and carry them back to the dressing-stations. *"Imaginez-vous!"* he wrote Adrian in surprise, "that one of the sections of automobile ambulançes which take the wounded from the first dressing-shelters back to the hospitals are American Fords, driven by young Americans. I call that *chic!* Lads who could be at home in comfort with their girls. *And not even their expenses paid!"* Matey could not repress an involuntary smile over the French "realism" of that last underlined exclamation. Mimi was struggling on in La Ferté, trying to learn to manufacture plumbing-fixtures with a working force of old and infirm men. She had been able, finally, late in October, to make a flying trip to Paris, to see her mother. "There is gray in her hair," Mme. Vinet reported, "at thirty-two. She looks like some one else. A Mimi I never saw." They had decided, the two women who were the only members of the family who could come together for a council, that at all costs Mme. Vinet should keep the apartment, in case Ziza might even then be struggling toward that refuge. "We hear now that it is not safe to trust to a moratorium for rent, because it will be ruinous after the war is over to pay the accumulation. But I have things I can sell. My mother's India shawl will bring in quite a sum. And that little Greek statuette presented to my husband by his old students, I could probably find a purchaser for that."

Her American foster-daughter saw her sitting alone in the old home fighting down grief and fear and looking about her to see what pounds of flesh would be salable. That letter brought Matey for the first time a possibility of relief. All that day she was turning over this possible escape from the horror of her own inaction. trying to think of words that would do to begin to speak of it to Adrian.

While Matey cleared away the supper-table Adrian usually went upstairs with the children, told them a story or two while they undressed, and sat between their beds while they fell asleep. That night she did not hear him come down. She finished and went into the living-room. It was smiling warmly with lights and books and the sea-coal fire, but Adrian was not there. Looking out, she saw in the light from the street lamp that he was pacing up and down the front walk, his hands in his overcoat pockets. She snapped off the electric lights, put on a wrap, and went out, Mme. Vinet's letter in her hand, desperation in her heart.

When he saw her coming he said in a constrained tone as though he owed her an apology, "I couldn't settle down indoors."

Matey slipped her arm through his. They began to walk up and down together, coming as they approached the street into a circle of white light, stepping into deeper and deeper darkness on the way back toward the house. Matey was asking herself, "How can I begin? With what words can I—" Adrian said in an uncertain tone, so low that she could scarcely hear his voice, "I haven't said much to you about it before, Matey—I—I had another letter from Marceau today—I don't suppose you can realize how it makes a man feel to—" Forgetting her, he burst out loudly, "It makes a man feel like a *dog* to be wallowing here in comfort and safety, while . . . other men, old friends, old comrades . . ."

Matey felt as if he had struck her, and instantly struck back at him in a reflex of anger. "How do you think it makes a woman feel? You think it's perfectly all right and natural, I suppose, for a woman to be in a position that makes a man feel like a dog?"

Their vehemence had stopped them short. In the light from the street lamp Matey examined her husband's face as if he were an enemy, resentment burning darkly in her eyes.

There was no answering resentment in Adrian's face, rather an expression of apology. "I ought to have known you'd feel it too," he said, "but I've been wrapped up in my own problems . . . yes, I can see now that it must be worse for a woman . . . she has to stand it without even the consolation of thinking there's anything she might do about it."

Matey stared at him, her resentment mixed with astonishment at his grim accent and the set lines of his face. "Why, Adrian, what could you possibly do any more than I? As much as I? You aren't thinking . . . even if you were French you wouldn't fight?"

"Matey, I don't know! I can't tell you how hellishly I go round and round between what I believe and what seems necessary. . . . I don't know what I'd do if I were French . . . it's all out of the question anyway. I didn't mean to say anything about it . . . but if I weren't married, if it weren't for leaving you and the children . . . No, I don't suppose I'd fight, though that would be the logical thing to do—the way I feel. No." He laughed unsteadily. "I suppose I'd compromise, try to help out somehow short of actually taking my share . . . there's the Belgian relief . . . and Marceau mentioned those ambulances. *I* can drive a Ford."

Matey took his hand in hers as they walked, and said, pressing home her words as though they were swords, "Adrian, where do you think *I* would have been by this time if I had not been married?"

It was Adrian's turn to be astonished. "Why, what could you do?" he echoed. "There are plenty of women—poor things—to look out for everything that can be done behind the lines."

"Most of them are busy trying to earn a living for their babies and their old people!" All the passionate accumulation of her thoughts burst out. She told him of what was in Mme. Vinet's last letter. "Of all her children, she hasn't one with her. . . . I am like one of her daughters, I owe her much of whatever it is one owes a mother. She hasn't any money to live on, she can't keep the apartment there for Ziza perhaps to come back to, without more money. And we have Aunt Connie's. She writes in every letter of being swamped in trying to help destitute refugees—with nothing but the clothes on their back—half crazy some of them—all women and children and old men. That's woman's work. Why should I wallow here in safety and comfort any more than you?"

Adrian reminded her in a horrified voice, "But, Matey—the children!"

"They're your children as much as mine," she said steadily, and loosed her hand from his, walking at his side, waiting.

After a startled look into her face, Adrian turned his eyes away. They paced up and down silently. Her demand was something so new for him. She saw now with patience how new it was for any man. She could feel how long it lay on the surface of his mind before he could let it in.

In her heart she was saying over and over passionately, "Let me in. Let me in. We are man and wife." She thought, "This must be the way religious people pray." And later, "This is perhaps prayer."

Presently as they turned again from the house out toward the lighted street Adrian had come to the point of being able to say, not contentiously but more in his usual voice, with an Adrian-like wish to consider everything fairly, "But, Matey—look here—how *could* we both? The children have *got* to be . . . I don't see . . ."

"I don't see either," said Matey. "That's what . . . What I want is to think about it together, instead of separately!" She took his hand again.

They marched off toward the future, looking for the path together. They walked out toward the world and turned back toward the children, over and over, up and down the old flagstones of the old path.

It was now very late. The street light went out. A thin moon showed itself palely through the elms, rose higher, and shone more brightly as they walked and talked. The mere fusing of their overwrought nerves brought—miracle of human fellowship!—more quiet, more steadiness than either had known for months. They went round and round the situation, pushing against every locked door, trying the strength of every bar. Time and again they put away the whole idea as madness, only to return immediately to considering possible ways and means. Aunt Connie's money—yes, they could use that—if they had the right to endanger their one small nest-egg of capital. From the money they passed to talking of Aunt Connie, feeling as never before the meaning of her frustrated life. "She must have walked up and down here, right up and down this very street, as raging to use herself to some purpose as we are now. But all alone! Never any mate, never any comrade! She never did find a way out."

"It takes two," said Adrian, "to find a way out. A real two at that."

They looked across to Aunt Connie's house, where Priscilla slept beside her foster-children. Matey said, "How shallow-minded I was about Priscilla's marriage! I'd forgotten about Aunt Connie's fate. I never see the real sense of things at first."

"There are all sorts of ways of being shut out from life," said Adrian. "Priscilla isn't as bad as some."

"Adrian, I feel as though Aunt Connie were walking up and down with us right here, telling us to take her money and go. She'd *want* us to."

"Well, that's one way of putting it," admitted Adrian. "What would she say about taking the children, I wonder?"

"I tell you one thing," said Matey with conviction, "if Aunt Connie had lived with Petella for five years as we have, she'd know the child wouldn't want to be left out of a chance to help."

"What in the world could a child of that age . . . ?"

"When you *live* with a person, even a child, you *know*," said Matey. She felt that Adrian thought this a womanish notion, and tried to think of specific proofs. Were those incidents of child life anything a man would call "proofs"? Could you reason so from small to great? Yes, you could. Most of what understanding she had had come to her from the light cast on great events by small ones. "Well, anyhow I know!" she repeated.

Adrian put the question aside. "Probably it's not so life-and-death as we think," he suggested. "The war can't last long—six months at the outside. You and they'd be safe enough in Paris."

They went on to talk of details, of letters to be written, inquiries to be made. Matey interrupted this planning to make a confession. "Look here, Adrian, I mustn't set up to be any less self-centered than you. It hadn't occurred to me you might be feeling it as I did. If I'd spoken first I'd have left you out too, I'm afraid. I couldn't think of *anything* but—"

"I know, I know," said Adrian, "civilization going to the scrap-heap and—"

"No, I wasn't feeling anything thoughtful and abstract like that," Matey interrupted. "I don't feel that way now. I know all that. But I don't feel it. If it hadn't been for the Vinets I wouldn't have felt it any more, probably, than—old Mr. DuBois."

"Oh, as far as that goes, I too," said Adrian humbly. "I've a lot of old friends in the French army myself."

They went back to their equal-to-equal talk of ways and means, talk of action which, vague though it was, drew out some of the poison from their inaction.

Once as they halted for a moment under the old beech tree, something very tiny and light eddied down from the darkness of the branches. Matey put up her hand to see what it could be. Dandelion fluff could not be flying in November. It was a tiny downy feather. "From an owl, perhaps," said Adrian dreamily. Their excitement and tension had slowly poured out through their hope to act and left them in a tired tranquillity.

For a time as they walked and talked Matey held this morsel of down between her fingers. It was so fine and small she could scarcely feel it. And yet—she held it up when the moon shone out brightly—every one of its clustering hundreds of fronds was fringed with flawless symmetry. "How can it be so infinitely perfect—so infinitely small," she wondered, musingly.

"There's no big or little in infinity, is there?" said Adrian.

She blew it from her finger and watched it settle to the earth through the still, cold night air.

The moon sank behind the house. They still walked up and down, hand in hand. Finally it sank behind the hills across the Hudson. And yet they were not in darkness. They looked around and saw their old home world standing steadily about them.

"We've walked the night out, sweetheart," said Adrian. "This is the dawn."

5

When Francis wrote, as he did in February, Matey thought wildly, "I don't care if he is my brother. This is too much!"

What had been in his hurried note was the advice to put every penny she and Priscilla could lay their hands on into Steel. "Fortunes are going to be made there. This war is going to last lots longer than most people think. The European factories can't begin to supply their demands. It's a wonderful new market. Every American manufacturer who's got anything to sell is going to make money. They say the people in the foodstuff business feel the upward pull already. But steel products! That's what Europe's going to need most, of course, arms and ammunition. Emily's sister is married to one of the steel men here, so we get the inside dope. If you take that little nest-egg Aunt Connie left you out of the savings-bank and put it into Steel you'll be on Easy Street, take it from me. Emily and I are selling everything—we've even put a big mortgage on the house—and buying stock. Common, you understand. Don't buy preferred. It's the common that's going to soar."

Matey tore this letter up angrily. It was one of the things about Francis she did not tell Adrian. She thought, "I feel as if I never wanted to see him again!"

Yet the next time her brother came, she ran with a cry of pity to put her arms around his neck. For nine days Francis had had a little daughter. And now she was dead. So much his sisters had learned from a letter written them by an aunt of his wife's. The very next day Francis stumbled up the steps to Matey's door. She opened to his knock, she looked into her brother's face —"Why, Francis! *Francis!*" she cried.

They went down the street to Priscilla's. "I just wanted to see you girls," said Francis pitifully, taking Matey's hand as they walked over the glittering gayety of the sunlit snow. "Seemed as if it would do me good to see you. I never left my little girl, Matey. I stayed right there in the hospital. They thought blood transfusion would save her, perhaps. They took mine."

When they reached Priscilla's he went on talking, although his lips shook so that he could scarcely form the words. "They took my blood for her, Priscilla. She was the nicest little kid! At first I couldn't think who she looked like. But after a while—do you remember how Matey looked when she was a baby, Priscilla? Sort of wide between the eyes? That's how my poor little girl looked. I was going to get a dog for her. Matey always took so much comfort in that old dog. You were an awfully nice kid, Matey. *She'd* have been— I sat there planning what I'd do for her. And—only nine days! I couldn't believe it when the poor little thing stopped breathing. You girls are all I've got in the world of my own, now." He began frankly to cry, undone to childishness by grief and sleeplessness and loss of blood.

His sisters, shocked and compassionate, got him food, got him to bed, cared for him as though he had been a sick person, and sent a telegram saying he was safe with them, to that aunt of Emily's who had written them. Since Emily was in the hospital, ill, this was the only name and address they had.

He fell asleep soon, his mouth sagging wearily, peace at last on his tear-reddened eyelids. Matey, looking in at him, shuddered. Suppose she had already quarreled with him about that letter, had shut her door against him! How touching he looked, defenseless, appealing, human! Calamity had brought to the surface a Francis she had never known. So it had been for her father! How different they would have been both, if there had been more pain and sorrow in their lives! But they were so competent in avoiding pain. Her head ached with trying to understand. She could get no further now than understanding that deprivation like Aunt Connie's was not the only thing that frustrated what might have come to be. Success, too, could check growth. How terrible if she had already shut him out! How like her, to feel so angry at him just the first time he needed her!

Bewildered, always wrong Matey! She was discouraged by the steepness of the uphill road that led from her childish hardness toward a little understanding of the rich complexity of life. It seemed to her that she stood still, never advanced at all, unless swept forward—why, like Francis! like her father!—by a blow, by calamity.

Francis slept almost twenty-four hours, and when he woke, a little refreshed though still weak and sad, "I must get back to Emily," he said. "Where's a time-table?"

Matey abased herself remorsefully with the resolve never to forget that his first thought was for his wife.

At the station, pacing together soberly up and down the snow-covered platform, he and his sisters, freed from themselves for a moment, had a talk such as they had never known.

"Father and Mother lost their first child, too," said Francis. "Mother always thought it was a judgment on them. It was a little boy."

"I never heard about a first child!" said Matey.

"No, Father never talked to you girls as much as he did to me. You were always hard on them, Matey, in your way. I've often thought you and Priscilla held them off—"

"Held them off!" cried Priscilla.

"Well, anyhow, after you grew up, you didn't make it easy for them to feel close to you, you know you didn't."

Priscilla laid an unconsciously dramatic hand on her heart and stared beyond her brother at her past.

"I've always wanted to talk to you about them. But *you* know—it's not easy to begin. And you girls always took everything so hard. Maybe now you're married yourselves—*they* were all right, Father and Mother were! Fitted each other. I know they never did get it settled which one was going to be king-pin. But scrapping over that kept them up to the mark. Scrapping's what keeps people fit, anyhow. Suppose Mother'd been the soft, resigned kind of woman. Inside of three years Father wouldn't have been fit to live with. It does a man *good* to have to fight to keep his end up. Fighting's the law of life. And faithful to each other—! There was a Mrs. Whitlock in Logan Bluffs—no, Hamilton it was—you were probably too young to take it in, Matey, and it was after you left, Priscilla. Well, she fairly threw herself at Father's head. Rich, too. But did he dream of taking her seriously? Not on your life. And Mother knew that. She never had to worry a single minute about her husband's being taken with another woman." He looked at his sisters, astonished at their lack of response, "Great Scott, girls! what more can a woman ask!"

They found no answer.

"And Mother too . . . I bet the first girl Father was engaged to wouldn't have had the nerve to keep him up to his best as Mother . . . You did know, didn't you, that he was engaged to another girl when he met Mother? That was one of the things that made them so—"

"No!" cried Matey.

They had not noticed that the train was there, the wind of the locomotive's passage blowing their long skirts about.

"Another time . . ." said Francis, kissing his sisters. But they knew this was the only time. "All I wanted anyhow was to sort of stand up for them a little, and to tell you, Matey, don't be so *hard* on folks!"

He was gone. His astounded sisters looked into each other's eyes. But a neighbor of theirs had left the train, a D.A.R. member. She walked home between Mrs. Fort and Mrs. Russell, telling them about an eighteenth-century letter, sent back from England recently to the Dutchess County Historical Society, which gave an irate account of how the soldiers of the Revolution, camped at Fonteynkill, had taken the rail fences for miles around for their camp cooking and had even stripped off the siding from the Reformed Church as high as they could reach. Matey thought, "When we get to the house and all by ourselves, Priscilla and I must—"

"That's why the lower clapboards of the Fonteynkill Church are of a later period!" explained Mrs. Deyo.

As the three passed the bank, Adrian raised a window and called, "Matey, come in a minute, will you?"

Priscilla went on with Mrs. Deyo. Adrian came out on the walk bareheaded although the cold was intense. He held an open letter in his hand. "I've got the answer from the New York office of that ambulance service," he said to his wife. Matey read its few lines in one glance. Looking at each other silently, the Forts made their decision.

6

Two months later, when they announced their plans, the young Forts expected to stand quite alone when the storm of horrified disapproval broke over them. But to their surprise, at least to Matey's, Adrian's father stepped quietly over to their side out of the crowd of protesting prudent people who had ordinary good sense. On the evening when they first told him, he said nothing at all. He listened through to the last word of their somewhat agitated explanation of their plan. After they had said everything over twice, he sat a long time thinking, his eyes closed, his gray head propped on one hand. Sharing that silence with him, they felt something of his quietness come into their troubled hearts. Matey thought, "It's like letting turbid water stand still till it clears itself."

Finally he lifted his head, looked at them, smiled, shook his head, and said, "I'll have to have more time, I'm afraid," and putting on his hat and coat, he let himself out of the house. Two days later he came in, and finding his daughter-in-law, told her, "I'm glad Adrian is not going alone."

"Oh, Padre!" said Matey, thanking him with a look. She asked him timidly then, longing for his approval, not hoping for it, "Padre, about taking the children—it's not—I know they would be safe here with you and Priscilla—but—"

Struggling with herself, she tried vainly to break her silence about the moral atmosphere of her childhood. "I think the risk of —I feel—" She looked away from his attentive eyes and said in a low shamed voice. "I learned when I was a little girl that *anything* is better than letting a barrier grow up between parents and children."

He waited a moment before he answered. She ventured a hurried glance at him and saw in his face a silent fatherly compassion.

When he spoke he humanely made no reference to the words wrung from her, answering her in a judicial tone, "Petella and little Adrian are human beings as well as children. Older people are apt to forget that. Why should we take for granted that if they knew what the choice was, they would, any more than you and Adrian, prefer safety and comfort to . . ."

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried Matey. "That's just what I felt, but I didn't know how to put it."

Adrian's father used rather steadily his ability to "put" it from the time his children's plans were known until they were gone. One such talk of his helped her over the worst, Priscilla's feeling. He met Priscilla one day going out of the Fort house, crying as though there had been a death in the family. "I can't *stand* their going!" she told him.

"I don't think they'll regret it," he said moderately. Inside the house (it was April then, and the windows were open) Matey stood to listen.

"But the children, Mr. Fort!"

"I doubt if the children will ever regret it, either."

"Regret it! . . . Will they live through it to have any opinion!"

"There must be several million children of their age in France," said Mr. Fort. "Matey made inquiries about supplies, milk and schools and everything. Mme. Vinet reports everything near enough normal for health."

Priscilla redoubled her protests. "Honestly, Mr. Fort, it seems to me wickedly wrong, to do anything that might in any way be a disadvantage to your children!"

"Ah, there are various kinds of disadvantages," Mr. Fort reminded her. "Perhaps when they grow up, to know that they did not stand in the way of a generous-hearted action of their parents' but shared it will be no disadvantage."

Priscilla caught at the word "generous." "You mustn't think I'm—Francis has perhaps written you that— It's *not* the money. I wouldn't care a bit if Matey gave every cent of Aunt Connie's money to them . . . just sent it to Mme. Vinet by the first mail. But to . . ."

"Do you suppose Mme. Vinet would accept it?" asked Mr. Fort. "Self-respecting people retain their self-respect, I imagine, even in wartimes. If you were alone, in distress, two of your children gone, the others in danger, yourself in want, how would you feel if Matey just sent money to you? Is there any decent way to give money except to give yourself with it? And anyhow, I haven't the faintest idea that the war *can* last much longer. I expect them back in the autumn. The children will get a good French accent out of it."

Priscilla was outraged by his lack of heroics. "Mr. Fort, how *can* you! Those darling babies. You're their *grandfather!*"

"I'm Adrian's father, too," Mr. Fort reminded her. "You must remember that I too couldn't stand it to be safe. I ran away to be a . . ."

"But you weren't *married* and a father!"

"It will be a sorry day," said Mr. Fort, energetically, for the first time losing his implacable patience, "when getting married and becoming a parent puts an end to being a member of humanity!"

For an instant Matey feared he had gone too far and criticized too plainly Priscilla's ingrowing maternity. It was all she had salvaged, and it was natural—it was perhaps essential—that she should think it all there was to be had.

After her sister had gone, she went out on the porch to thank her father-in-law. "It's wonderful, Padre, how you know what to answer them, every time," she said gratefully. She wished she dared give him a hug, as she did to Adrian when her feelings overflowed. But that was one of the things you did not do to the cool old Quaker. So she went on, straining words to make them say what a hug would have said, "We just wouldn't have the courage to do this if it weren't for you, Padre."

"Oh, yes, you would," he drily corrected her sentimental overstatement. And nodding, went on his way.

Matey looked after him, abashed, nettled, respectful. "Every word of his is fresh from the mint, full value," she reflected, "but I know what Dirck Davis's wife objects to in them!"

She and Adrian felt better, calmer, quieter, now that it was decided. Matey went back to her piano, and never played so much for her father-in-law as in the period when the last preparations were being made, their tickets bought, the manner arranged for Adrian's father to forward to them the necessary installments of Aunt Connie's money.

Francis's wife had had a relapse and was so ill he could not leave her. But he wrote. Matey held the letter in her hand a long time. She remembered the use he had wished her to make of Aunt Connie's money. But she remembered too how softened her heart had been on his last visit, and how startled she had been to learn that Francis had been, all during their youth, more tolerant than she. Or was it only that he had been more insensitive? Or were those two ways of saying the same thing? At any rate he was her brother. She laid the unopened letter on the fire and wrote him, "I didn't read your letter, Francis. I knew what would be in it, and what's the use? Be good to Priscilla while we're gone. And don't let's ever ever forget that we grew up together."

He wrote Adrian then. "Francis thinks we're perfect soft-hands," reported Adrian, knowing nothing of the first letter, "fooled by all this 'pro-Ally guff,' as he calls it, about France and Belgium being martyred nations. He says that invasion of Belgium is what any modern nation would have done, and that the war isn't anything but a commercial scheme to ruin Germany because she's efficiently industrial. *You* know! *That* line!"

His father nodded his familiarity with that line.

But Matey did not know it at all and said so. "My goodness, why bring in political economy? Does he think we're going because . . . why, I'd like to tell him that if it was a German family that I loved as much as the Vinets, and owed as much to, I'd go to Germany just as . . ."

"Well, *I* wouldn't!" said Adrian. "You've got another guess coming if you think that's the way I feel. I'm going to do my share to help France win the war, and don't you forget it!"

"You're a better Friend than your husband," the older Adrian said to his daughter-in-law.

"See here, Father," his own son challenged him, "you weren't so impartial yourself. Would you just as soon have joined the Confederate medical corps as the Federal? You know you wouldn't."

His father's face darkened. Matey remembered he had never said a word about those three years of his life. There was a silence. Then: "When I went away from home I wouldn't. After the first battle . . ." He got up, a strange expression in his eyes. "It's one of the things there's no use talking about," he said roughly, walking away.

Matey was not always as sure as her words. There were mornings when she woke up thunderstruck by their madness in even thinking of taking the children away from physical safety. On such a day Francis came to see her. He did not exclaim or reproach or protest. He simply talked the plainest sort of common sense.

"What do you think you can do, Matey," he asked, "to help the cause of the Allies? You and the children will be only more mouths to feed, more dependents to look after. Let Adrian go if he thinks he ought to. This is no job for women and children. You're not cut out for a *vivandière* anyhow."

"But there are women and children there, Francis, who need what a woman could—"

"Now, Matey, use the old bean a little. France is a rich modern country. Don't you think she'll take care of her own without help from Rustdorf in Dutchess County? What good do you suppose a woman and two young children are going to do? You're not any wonder of strength yourself, you know, with those sick headaches of yours."

Matey thought. "I did use to have sick headaches! I wonder when they stopped?" To Francis she said, "I'm perfectly well and strong now, Francis, much better than when I was a girl."

"Use your strength to take care of your own children then," he told her with his first severity. "How anybody who *has* a child to look out for . . ."

Matey knew what he was thinking of and said nothing.

He went on, "It's not surprising that you are carried away almost hysterically by this. That's the trouble with you home-keeping women, when you *do* make an exception and take some interest in public matters you haven't anything to judge by. Nothing in your sheltered lives corresponds to the realities of the great world, of course. Take it from me, there is not a pennysworth to choose between the two sides in this war. They are all in it for what they can get out of it, and they all brought it on themselves. The thing for Americans to do is to let them stew in their own juice. For heaven's sake, why get into the mess when we *are* out of it, in a safe place—"

His voice went on, but for a moment Matey no longer heard the words. The rug of her living-room turned into bare barn boards and on them a hapless, blindfolded, befooled little boy staggered about, reaching out desperately into vacancy for the comrades who must be there if he could only find them.

That night she told Adrian, "Francis was here today."

"What did he say?"

"A lot of unanswerable common sense. I hadn't a word to say for myself."

Adrian looked at her hard.

"Now I'm *really* sure we ought to go," she said. "I won't doubt it again."

Adrian's father was the last of their own they saw on the dock as their steamer pulled out. He had put his by no means new hat on the end of his umbrella and was waving it absurdly at them as though they were off for a summer vacation. Matey could scarcely see him through her tears as she put away in her memory his last words to her.

Standing beside her on the deck, while Adrian at the other end of the ship showed the children how the donkey-engine worked, he said in his inimitably natural voice, "Matey, I'm nearly seventy, you know, and the Forts are not long-lived. I fully expect to be here when you come back, but it's possible that I may not be. I don't mention that because it's of any consequence, of course. A few years more or less . . . ! But it *would* be a pity if

I let you go without making sure that you know what you have been to me. It's not only that I've seen you grow from a nice girl into a deep-hearted woman who's the best wife I could imagine for my son. But for me . . . I'd thought I'd go down to my grave, always feeling the emptiness left by the death of my little girl. Yet you have filled it. I *have* had a daughter after all."

Matey forgot her shyness of him then, put her arms around him and kissed him with all her heart. She longed to tell him that she who had missed having a father, perhaps by her own fault, had found one after all. But deeply moved as she was, she could think of no words that would not sound theatrical. She was so much more fluent than he and could say so much less.

Now as the ship was slowly leaving the dock, she could only wave her handkerchief at his small lean elderly figure, and strain her ears to hear what last greeting he was shouting to Petella, who, Adrian clutching at her skirts, leaned herself half across the railing, shouting excitedly, confusedly, "Good-by, Padre! *Good*-by! Come again! *Good*-by!"

"What did Padre call out to you the last thing?" asked her mother.

"Oh, he just hollered, 'Be a good girl, Petella!' "

He never bothered about what words to use, thought Matey. Any words would do for him.

7

They passed at once from a world where their action had been melodrama to a world where it was a commonplace. But few Americans were in the second class with them. The first class was almost deserted. People with money enough to travel in comfort naturally stayed away from France because of the trouble there. It was, of course, the trouble there that was taking back the second-class passengers. The men, mostly no longer young, were going to help out women relatives left manless, to get in the crops, to hold small businesses together till the head could get back from the front; to do, in short, what there was no one to help Mimi do. Many of the plain, self-supporting women were doing just what Matey was doing, going back to take with service and money the place of members of the family dead, or buried alive in the regions occupied by the Germans. No one thought it surprising that the Forts were going back to France, too. Matey's French made them suppose that she was a Frenchwoman married to an American. "But perhaps your husband is of French parentage, too? Adrian Fort. There was a family of Forts living down the street from us in Noyon. He is perhaps related to them?" The Rustdorf Forts, accepted, taken for granted, sank unnoticed into the second-class passenger list. Adrian asked his wife, "What in thunder made us wait so long?"

The first part of the trip was fine, sunny and quiet. People walked up and down the decks or took the May sunshine in steamer-chairs, played shuffleboard, flirted and gossiped as if it were any crossing. Matey and Adrian smiled shamefacedly a good many times at the beating on the emotional drum which had preceded their departure. The children were enchanted with the new experience, and Brother was enchanted with the new language. He inhaled and exhaled it as if it were air, embellishing his baby-talk English with scraps of baby-talk French which sent his father into fits of laughter. *"Mon dieu!"* exclaimed Brother, dressing himself with difficulty on the floor of their cabin, *"Mon dieu!* I dot my left slipper on my wight *pied."* His language had a great success. As he trotted about the deck, people stopped him to hear this bilingual babble. Petella, on the other hand, suffered Anglo-Saxon agonies of self-consciousness. At the very idea of saying a word in the strange language she felt and looked wild. But she was very proud of Brother's French, and Matey often heard her showing it off to by-standers.

Halfway across, talk of a submarine attack began. Before they left it had been considered certain that passenger ships would never be attacked. There was a rumor among the passengers of a French armed ship being sent to convoy them through dangerous waters. Anxious eyes searched the ocean. Port-holes were darkened. No one was allowed to strike a match on deck at night. A notice appeared in each cabin warning passengers to have their life-belts at hand. It no longer seemed in the least like vacation travel. No one made any pretense of enjoying danger. Matey woke up a good many times during the last nights out and lay listening to the vibration of the ship's engines till they seemed the pulse of her own being, the mysterious rhythm which was driving her forward over a dark sea to an unknown destination.

She recognized this thought as one which Adrian's father would feel an impulse to deflate. "How he takes the dramatic quality out of things!" she told herself impatiently. Later she perceived that his dry coolness was enemy only to melodrama, and that deflating its falsity, he allowed the real drama to emerge. "As if it were only *now* that I am driven by a mysterious rhythm to an unknown destination!" she thought.

Late one evening the ship came into the mouth of the Garonne. The passengers were told they would dock at Bordeaux early the next morning. Every one packed before going to bed. Matey was tired and fell asleep as soon as she lay down in her berth. The children had long been tucked away in their upper bunks.

She woke to a sensation of panic. There was not a sound. Why was this stillness so death-like? Oh, the engines had stopped! No wonder she felt as though her own pulse were stilled. A thud of feet came along the corridor. Some one rapped on their door. "Yes," said Adrian, springing up to open. Out of the dark a voice said hurriedly in French. "We are in a mine-field. The captain has ordered the ship stopped till dawn, hoping she will lie quiet enough not to strike against one. Every one is to dress and have his life-belt at hand. *No lights.*" The feet went thudding down the corridor, a knock on the next door, *"Qu-est-ce-que-c'est?"* in a startled voice from behind the door.

Matey and Adrian groped for their clothes, dressed, and decided to let the children sleep. "If we need to, you can carry Brother, and I'll take Petella. They'd better sleep if they can," said Adrian.

They sat down on Adrian's berth. And waited. Matey thought, "Now I shall know whether I can endure fear."

Adrian took her hand. "Are you afraid, dear?"

She began, "Not so much, oh, not near so much as—" and was silent.

It was true. This was not her first encounter with fear. She had met it years ago, and what she felt now could not be compared to that black helpless waiting for catastrophe of the child she had been, tragically unfortified, like all children, by experience. Nothing had then come into her life strong enough to stand between her and her fear—over the oatmeal, bitter as poison on bad mornings—that there was nothing real in life but the wish to hurt. That had been true despair. But this present danger—all that was not physical in her stood apart from it, unthreatened, secure.

She tried again to answer Adrian's question. "I don't believe grown-ups can ever be as afraid as children. There's so much you're sure of that can't be hurt that a child doesn't know."

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Adrian blankly, "and I tell you what, Matey, I may not be what you'd call scared, but this business of being shut up in a hole—see here, why can't we take the children and our life-belts up on the deck where we could at least—"

"Good heavens, *yes!*" cried Matey fervently, her heart leaping at the thought of being in the open air. She *was* afraid, she saw that. But if fear wasn't any worse than this! How wonderful to be grown up! How tender one should be to helpless children, for whom the present is all!

"For goodness' sakes!" said Petella, opening her eyes and blinking in the sunlight. "How'd we ever get up *here* in our sleeping-drawers! And what am I sitting on Father's lap for? How *cunning* Brother looks!"

Brother still lay, a blanket-swathed cocoon in his mother's arms, sound asleep, though one of the horizontal rays of the rising sun struck rosily across his round face.

"Mother and I thought it would be fun to carry you up on deck to see the sun rise," said Adrian.

"Didn't we even wake up when you took us out of bed?"

"Just like sacks of meal!"

"What's that?" asked Petella, pointing to three masts emerging from the water. "Looks like the top of a ship. It is the top of a ship! What made it sink? Why, there's some more masts, down the river a little. What made so *many* sink? What are we on a river for, anyhow? I thought big ships didn't go up rivers. What's that funny-looking building over there? Oh, who are those men in . . ."

"Petella, not a question out of you till I get my breakfast," said her father irritably, setting her down on the deck with a shake. "You run along and get *dressed*." Adrian was as natural with his children as with any one else, and when he was tired and cross he showed it. Petella giggled at the idea of being on deck in her sleeping-drawers and scampered off down the stairs.

"Why," wondered Matey, "do the children mind it so little when Adrian speaks impatiently to them? My parents never did to me, and yet . . ." She knew why, of course. "It is because *they* know, as I did not, there is nothing to fear, underneath." She caught herself up with remorse. Here she was again, thinking in that old childish, unjust way as though she had not learned better. *Had* she learned better? Could you ever unlearn something that had grown into your memories?

Adrian said, yawning, "Quite a night." He looked at her somberly and asked, "Are you sorry . . . ?"

"No!"

His face lightened. "You're a game old girl," he told her, getting up stiffly from his steamer-chair. He looked more tired than Matey felt, although she was quite tired enough. But ever since their decision, under no matter what fatigue, she had felt as after Petella's birth a ground-swell surge of conviction that she had enough strength for whatever she had to do.

"Wake up, *petit frère,"* she murmured to the child in her arms.

They watched the docks of lower Bordeaux slide slowly by. It was late in the afternoon, the trip up the mine-sown Garonne even in broad daylight having been conducted with extreme care. Matey was tired, sleepy and disheartened. Bordeaux looked like any modern city, invulnerably industrial. She wondered why they had thought France was in need. Maybe Francis had been right. Certainly the business-like streets they passed, with trolley cars clanging and trucks moving up and down, did not look in the least like an organism blindfolded and befooled, staggering about in vacancy.

"There's the dock where we're going to land," said one of the passengers. They approached it more and more slowly. A group of people stood there, leaning against the custom-house walls. "Probably been waiting for the ship since four o'clock this morning," surmised somebody else. "The pilot said that about midnight a rumor got about in the city that our ship had struck a mine and gone to the bottom."

Matey ran her eyes over the people waiting. How French they were! Why did any group of French people look so different from Americans? There was a small, thin old woman in black, with a long black mourning-veil, who was crying and waving her handkerchief at some one on the ship. Matey turned her head to see who was waving back at her. No one. She looked again. The old woman seemed to be looking at *her*.

With a shock Matey knew whose was that ravaged human countenance. Across the narrowing stretch of water, she was looking full into the eyes of Mme. Vinet. It was her first glimpse of the war.

"Look, look!" she cried to Adrian. "It's Mme. Vinet! How can she have dared to leave the apartment! How *old* she looks!" She held up the children, calling out to Mme. Vinet, *"C'est Petella! Voici notre petit Adrien!"* To Adrian she said, in a whisper, "Can it be that they have heard Ziza is—" She shrank nervously from the word which was soon to pass her lips familiarly enough.

But when, carrying Brother, she made her way down the gangplank and ran toward Mme. Vinet she learned there was no news.

"Ziza . . . ?" she cried as she ran.

"Nothing yet," said Mme. Vinet, opening her arms.

"But how can you be here?"

"Henri is on leave—his first. He is at the apartment." She began to cry, drawing Matey and her little boy into a close embrace. "Oh, Mété, when last night I heard that thy ship had been—"

Matey drew back from her. "But, Mme. Vinet, you are missing some of Henri's precious time at home!" This might be the last time she would see Henri alive.

"Ziza and Mimi are not my only daughters now, my Mété," said Mme. Vinet.

8

BEFORE she left home, Matey, guessing that her time would be limited and wishing to avoid repetition, had arranged to send the news by way of a round-robin letter, intended for all the family and neighbors. She had little to write, she told them, that was interesting. "Paris is as quiet as Rustdorf," she reported, "and much darker at night. In fact Washington Street is like Forty-second Street and Broadway compared to the Champs Elysées after six o'clock. And nothing could be less like a *vivandière's* life than mine. I just keep house as usual. Adrian's news is all there is. He is accepted as an ambulance driver and is going to be sent into service just as soon as he can get his uniform made and all the innumerable papers prepared. The mail service from the front is very good. I'll hear from him every day or so except when something special is happening. Mme. Vinet gets a letter from Henri every morning. Petella watches out of the window for the mailman—she can spot him clear down in the street although we're four flights up—and runs down the stairs to bring Bonnemaman's letter to her. Mme. Vinet wants the children to call her Grandmother. They get on very well together. She says some of Petella's ways remind her of Priscilla. And I believe it's true. The way she takes care of Brother, it is like the way Priscilla used to take care of me. And Brother thinks just as I used to, if only his big sister is there, everything's sure to be all right.

"Mme. Vinet is in bed now for a while by doctor's orders. She was just about all in. Their little *bonne* had to go back to Quimperlé to help her father on the farm because her brothers are all at the front—those that are still alive. Most of the other servants in Paris have done something like this, too, so it's hard to get any help. The few that are left ask higher wages, and Mme. Vinet had very little money of course. She'd been trying to do for herself, and she'd never so much as boiled an egg before. You know how French bourgeoises always left household work to the slave-caste . . . especially those that have a profession, like Mme. Vinet. Her fingers that I used to think were like ten clever people on the piano keys act like idiots and maniacs in the kitchen.

"Henri didn't have to go back to the front till after we'd been here a couple of days, and he and Adrian and I had a regular French *conseil de famille* about how to arrange things. You know I wasn't any too sure they'd feel all right about my paying the rent and our staying here. Adrian and I had some 'talking points' all ready, what a help it would be to us if Mme. Vinet could let us in, and so forth. But all that sort of thing seems here like bowing and scraping over who's going to step off into the lifeboat first! They were pretty desperate. We ought to have come sooner. Henri nearly cried with relief—extraordinary to see him leave behind so wholly that little caustic surface manner of his. He's been nearly beside himself with anxiety about his mother, I imagine. You know they have always been like two halves of one person. He feels Polo's death as much as his mother. Not to know *anything* about Ziza! Henri and his mother keep on inquiring of Belgian refugees. But they have only found two people who have ever heard of the Conacqs. One was cook in a house in Ziza's suburb and knew Ziza's little maid, Mélanie. But all she could report was that young Mme. Conacq was one of the few ladies who stayed on in her home. Just what we knew Ziza would do. The other news comes from a student of the University of Louvain. He didn't know Ziza and her husband, but he had studied German under old Professor Conacq, Ziza's father-in-law. He tells us that the first day the Germans took the old professor as hostage and shot him before night as part of the reprisals against sniping at Germans.

"Henri and Mme. Vinet always speak of Ziza as though they were sure she is alive. But I've given her up. It's ten months since Mme. Vinet left her with the new baby . . . in Louvain! If she were alive I'm sure they would have had some word, through *some* refugee, by this time. Mme. Vinet always speaks of Ziza as though she might return any minute. To quiet her I've put my bed in what we used to call the dining-room, because it is close to the front door. This has given her a chance to go back to her own bedroom, and for the time being she is sleeping most of the twenty-four hours. Henri says he doesn't believe she's had two consecutive hours' sleep since the beginning of the war. She was always jumping out of bed and running to the door afraid she had not heard the knocking. That was one of the reasons why Henri was so relieved to have us here. Mimi wrote me a lovely letter about coming, too. Henri says she has been very much worried about her mother all alone here, but of course she must stay on in La Ferté to earn the living. There just aren't enough people left at the rear to do all that has to be done.

"Our things came all right. The children were so enchanted to see some of their old Rustdorf playthings come out of the trunk. Adrian put the kiddie-car together the first thing, and now it trundles up and down the *allées* of the Luxembourg as if it thought it was still in Washington Street. Brother takes so much comfort in it. People turn to laugh at the fat little boy having such a good time on his odd vehicle. I've put Padre's photograph —it's *not* a good likeness, is it, except the eyes—up on the mantelpiece in the living-room, opposite the photograph of M. Vinet beside that glass-covered monstrosity of a clock that never ran You remember that clock, Priscilla?

"I can't tell you how queer it seems to me to have my children knocking around in the old children's room where I spent so much time. And to take them out to play in the Luxembourg, just as Mme. Vinet used to take us! I don't believe a flower has changed in the flower-beds there, and I'm sure the wall-paper in the children's room is the same. Half the time I don't know whether it's then or now.

"I do hope Petella will get over her shyness about speaking French. Brother's learning it ten times faster than she. His English gets quainter every day. He said yesterday, '*Je veux avoir* two oranges. I *s'all* have two oranges, because I got two hungries in me.' It's too funny to hear him make the same mistakes in English that French children do! But Petella turns all colors and swallows her tongue if she's asked to say a word. She'd get on so much better in school next fall if she could only feel at home in the language."

Matey stopped the letter there, leaving in the position of emphasis this first intimation she had given her American family that she and Adrian would not be going home in the autumn. (Had she ever been sure the war could not last much longer?) She was worn out with the effort of keeping up that matter-of-fact reassuring tone. That would have to do for this time. She sealed the envelope and tiptoed to look in at Mme. Vinet. Her face, sunk in the pillow, was like alabaster. Her tiny emaciated body lifted the bedclothes. Henri had said, "You have saved my mother's life." Matey wasn't so sure she had come in time.

The children were playing in the children's room. "Petella, let's play soldiers. Soldiers going to smash Boches!" Where did they pick up things! Matey put her head in the door and asked severely, "Brother, where did you hear anything about Boches?"

"I sawn 'em, *insectes noires,*" said Brother, "crawling in the *cuisine* under ze table."

"We're all right, Mother," said Petella with a reassuring nod. Yes, she was a responsible child, as Priscilla used to be.

Matey went on into the living-room and found there the thought from which she had been running away. It was day after tomorrow that Adrian was going to the front. Their first separation. Forty-eight hours still. No, only forty-seven now.

It was a thousand times harder than she had realized. For an instant Matey thought wildly that it was going to be harder than she could stand. After all, she wasn't forced to stand it. All of this was voluntary. If it was too hard . . . Some one was looking at her. She felt a human gaze on her in the empty room... Oh, Padre's photograph. She sat down and met those eyes.

Presently she stood up and went into the kitchen to start dinner.

"Well, Mother, where have you *been?*" asked Petella and Brother, storming in from the children's room. "We didn't hear you anywhere, and we looked and you weren't with Bonnemaman, nor in your room."

"We look *pa'tout . . . pa'tout!*" said Brother, expressing with a Gallic gesture how thoroughly they had looked everywhere.

"You didn't look in the living-room," said their mother. "Padre and I were having Meeting together there."

"Oh," said Petella, looking hard at her mother to see what she meant.

"Que-est-ce-que-c'est que Meeting? *Qu-est-ce-que-c'est que* Meeting?" clamored Brother, opening his hazel eyes very wide.

"Brother, you're forgetting all about *home!"* said Petella, shocked.

9

"WHAT do you think, Francis and Priscilla," wrote Matey in her round-robin, that autumn, "who do you suppose is peeling potatoes in our kitchen this minute, but Dominiqua! Yes, Dominiqua Iturbe from Biriatou. You'd recognize her in a minute. She's changed less than we have.

"It happened the simplest way in the world. Everybody keeps track of everybody in his circle, and when there's need, they help out. For instance, you remember, Priscilla, the cross *concierge* here. Their son was badly wounded in a recent engagement. Nobody likes them a bit, but everybody in the house is chipping in together to send the boy things to eat and to make it possible fo his parents to see him in the hospital. And Mme. Vinet's *bonne* the one that went back to Brittany to help her father work th farm—she has three brothers still alive. Mme. Vinet sends something nice to them at the front every week or so, and sometime one of them comes here for his furlough, instead of going all th way back to Quimperlé. He sleeps in Henri's bed and eats with us

Astonishing to see such a dyed-in-the-wool old bourgeoise as Mme. Vinet invite her cook's brothers to her table.

"And more than this, Mme. Vinet keeps track through Henri, and through these Breton boys, of soldiers from the occupied regions whose families, like Ziza, have just dropped off the earth. Such fellows have now nowhere in their country to go to on furlough. Many of them haven't seen the inside of a home since they left Valenciennes or Tourcoing or Chauny or wherever they lived when the war broke out. Most of them are working-men who don't know what to do with themselves for a week in Paris. They get awfully fleeced and done. One reason Mme. Vinet was so run down and thin when I came was that she'd kept open house for such homeless fellows, doing for them as she does for Henri. She really starved herself to give them good things. They are coming and going, one or another, pretty much all the time.

"Well, that was what I came to do, if I could find it—*if I could find it!* Heavens! How could I ever have wondered if I could find it! And what I wanted to spend Aunt Connie's ever-blessed bequest on. But there weren't hours enough in the day for me to do it all without help in the kitchen. Mme. Vinet is better now, out of bed, but not strong yet, and anyhow worse than nobody for housework. I was wondering how ever I'd find help. Well, one of the soldiers here on furlough happened to mention having some Basques in his regiment and I thought of Dominiqua and her boy Jeannot, the one who was a baby in arms when we were children at Biriatou. She had another boy, too, younger. They must be, I thought, about twenty-five and twenty-three years old, the age when they are most sent into the shock troops. I've always kept some sort of track of Dominiqua, sent her a New Year's card every year, and some little present, so I knew her address. I wrote offering, if she'd tell me the military address of her sons, to do what I could for them in the way of sending packages. She wrote that her husband, like Mimi's, had been sent with territorial troops to remake shell-ruined roads along the northern front, where he got pneumonia and died. The younger son, like Polo, was lost in the battle of the Marne. Jeannot is still alive, in the Chasseurs Alpins, shock troops, just as I thought. And Dominiqua was at her wit's end to know how to live. Her tiny allowance from the government was scarcely enough to buy food. She had been working in the fields, digging potatoes, although she has a bad hernia. When I proposed to her to come here and work for us at good wages (*beata sancta* Connie, again!) two whole mail days nearer the front, where she could hear from Jeannot with no delay, I got a telegram from the stationmaster at Hendaye reading, 'Mme. Iturbe arrives Paris Bordeaux Express tomorrow nine-thirty.'

"I went down to meet the train, taking Petella along for the treat of riding home in a taxi afterward. I was wondering if I'd know Dominiqua. But gracious! In that conventionally dressed crowd she stood out as if she had been labeled Basque from head to foot. There she was in her black dress, espadrilles on her feet, black coif twisted around her chignon, as Basque as a striped ox-cloth. She knew us too, at least she knew Petella. As we ran up toward her, she cried out, 'Oh, *le petit François, que voilà!*' She says Petella is the perfect picture of Francis at her age.

"Well, she was terribly excited, first time she had ever been farther from home than up to Saint Jean-de-Luz. She called down on our heads the blessings of the Virgin Mary and all the saints she could lay her tongue to. And she wept all the way home in the taxi, and kept calling me *chère petite Mme. Mété,* although she's a tiny little woman like Mme. Vinet, and I'm as big as the two of them put together, and she undid her bundle to get out Jeannot's picture to show me, and couldn't find it, and thought she'd lost it, and then found it in her pocket! It was a wild trip! I thought I'd been crazy to think of transplanting her.

"But the sight of a kitchen restored her reason miraculously, like showing a laboratory to a distraught biologist, I imagine. She gave one look at it and said, 'Oh! the casseroles shouldn't hang *there!*' in a perfectly natural human voice. I tiptoed out and left her hanging them somewhere else, to her immense satisfaction—and mine, believe *me!* I suppose I seem as futile in the kitchen as Mme. Vinet does to me. If only the old Southerner doesn't freeze to death this winter (fuel's scarce of course) we're all set."

There, thought Matey, pushing the paper away with a weary gesture, that might be a good place to stop, with that second intimation that they would be staying on right through the winter.

No—she pulled it to her again—she must send some news from Adrian, who wrote only to his father.

"I inclose part of Adrian's last letter from the front, which will tell you how things go with him, as much as he's allowed by the censor to say. I'll know more of course and tell you more, when I've seen him. We don't know yet when his first furlough will come, probably next February."

Autumn came, the gloomy autumn of 1915—one Russian defeat after another, the murderous failure of the Champagne offensive, the savage invasion of Serbia, the Gallipoli tragedy. New disasters continually draped the French world in fresh black. French man-power never too numerous, seemed to be approaching exhaustion. Older and older men, younger and younger boys, were summoned from civilian life to military training. Women like Mimi who had boys of thirteen and fourteen began to count the days. "But it *can't* last. We have come to the end of the rope, almost," people said to each other in talk. Never in print.

Along with other changes in the world schooltime came. Petella had insensibly slid into French and was now learning in this Paris public school about the same information she would have absorbed in Rustdorf, the multiplication-table bulking large. Brother was in the kindergarten. He was a year younger than the regulation kindergarten age, but the teacher of that class was an old friend of Mme. Vinet's who had known Matey when she was a little girl. Room was easily made for the little boy of the American who had come to France to run an ambulance at the front. Along with other mothers and aunts and maids and little boys and girls, Matey and her children trudged down the wet gray street in the wet gray mornings to the door of the *lycée.*

She clung to the children's untouched zest in life almost as pitifully now as the men from the front *en permission.* Playing with Brother and Petella was the part of furloughs which the soldiers liked best. Now that she was separated from them most of the day, Matey understood more of what children meant. When they had held up their rosy faces to be kissed, had trotted off, hand in hand, to the mysteries within the *lycée,* and had left her standing on the muddy sidewalk, she often had a moment of panic at being left with her own thoughts and fears. But the never-ending list of things to be done built up another screen between herself and her thoughts. Mme. Vinet was not strong enough to be much on her feet, so she sat at home, writing the never-ending letters to the soldiers "on the list" or to their families with news of them, putting in order garments intended for refugees, wrapping up in the tiresomely exact manner prescribed by military authorities the innumerable packages of cigarettes, matches, chocolate, writing-paper, and woolen things which streamed out from the apartment to the front.

Matey did the outside things—the long shopping expeditions to buy cigarettes, chocolate, and other things for the packages, the visits to the men in hospitals, the endless standing in line in *bureaux* of one kind and another, the trips to remote parts of Paris in answer to requests from soldiers at the front for help to their families. One of the addresses to which she was sent in this way became very familiar to her. Day after day, she went in to help take care of a bedridden peasant girl, heart-broken by her husband's death two days after her baby was born. He had been in Henri's regiment, and from his death-bed had sent word to ask Henri's American foster-sister to look out for his wife. He had no one else. His wife's brother had been killed, her own parents were dead, his own family were under German rule in Valenciennes, nonexistent for her. Matey could find no link with life which had survived in her. She would not look at her baby, she turned her face away from the sun, she said nothing to Matey but *"Non, Madame," "Non, Madame."* The *concierge*, whom Matey paid to take care of the baby, and a nursing Sister of Charity who came in occasionally, both gave her up. "She'll be better off in Heaven, poor thing," said the Sister devoutly. The *concierge* said, "There's nothing to be done, Madame, with those peasants when they make up their minds to let go. . . . The baby will just have to go into an orphanage. He'll have plenty of company." Matey thought of the soldier she had never seen who, dying, had confided his helpless wife to her, and went on doggedly with her fumbling efforts to be a doctor to the soul. But her attempts at cheerful talk sounded foolish and flat as they echoed in the dark void of the tenement-house room.

One day she stopped at a street flower-stand and bought a bunch of country violets, last flowering of an outdoor bed, to take to the woman who would not get well. Young Mme. Letellier looked at them, put up her hand to them before she turned her face away. "There were violets in our garden at home," she said.

An intuition came to Matey. She found out from the *concierge* that Mme. Letellier's native village was Crouy, on the Ourcq. That was not far from La Ferté. Matey wrote to Mimi, explaining her plan and asking for information. Mimi's answer was prompt, accurate, detailed, sympathetic, unlike anything the old Mimi could have written.

A day came when Matey said to the listless invalid, "I have just heard about a piece of property that is for sale in Crouy. A small stone house, the Boutry family used to own it, near the canal, next door but one to the house where you lived as a little girl. I know of an American fund for war troubles, and if you liked, I could get from them money enough to buy this, as a place for you to bring up little Jacques. You probably remember the house. It has a big garden plot back of it. It would be nice, don't you think, to have your little Jacques grow up where you and your brother lived?"

The invalid did not stir or speak. Matey dared not stop. She went on, "A friend of mine who lives near there has gone out to Crouy to see it. She spoke specially of a fine old apple tree in the middle of the garden." From the sick woman came faintly, "When we played hide-and-seek with the Boutry children, that tree was our goal."

The baby was about two months old when Matey carried him and led his white-cheeked young mother into the Gare de l'Est, and settled herself with them in the train. After they had passed Meaux, Matey said, "You must tell me when we are near Crouy so that we can be ready to leave the train."

Mme. Letellier sat closer to the window. Presently she said, "Oh, that fine beet-field of the Auvarys' going to *weeds!*" Later, "They haven't cut those poplars yet on the Moronier farm! They'll certainly fall in some windstorm."

They walked down the narrow cobble-paved street, Matey the one who was led now. Mimi was waiting at the door of the tiny house. Matey scarcely knew her old playmate. This gaunt, masterful, steady-eyed woman, with gray in her carelessly arranged hair, and machine-oil ground into her hands—could this be the pensive *nonchalante* Mimi! There was no time for exclamations, for anything more than a sisterly embrace. There was but one train Matey could take back to Paris that day; it left in half an hour, and she was not yet sure of success.

Mimi's manner was perfect. Not a trace of the old French bourgeois superiority to peasants, "I happened to have a little extra furniture, Mme. Letellier," she said respectfully, "which I thought might be useful to you till you get settled." (This was what she and Matey had decided to say about the bits of furniture bought with Aunt Connie's money.) And, "Some of the neighbors who remembered you and your parents are coming to welcome you to Crouy. They will be here in a few minutes. Just time for you to take a turn about the house and garden if you like. Mme. Fort and I will stay here and take care of the baby."

She and Matey sat in the low, heavily beamed kitchen, the largest of the three small rooms of the house. Before them an economical French fire burned discreetly on a huge hearth. Matey noticed that Mimi had not only provided the necessary tables and chairs, but had put white curtains at the low windows, and pots of flowering geraniums. "That was sweet!" thought Matey. And with a motherly gesture Mimi took the fatherless baby on her knees. "I'll stay till the last train back to La Ferté tonight," she said. "I'll stay overnight if she seems to need me."

The two old comrades had less than ten minutes together, and most of it was given over hastily to the natural question-and-answer of family news. But almost from the first word and all through the talk about health and children and the difficulties of wartime housekeeping, Matey felt a growing sense of a change in Mimi, even greater than the change in her looks. It was as if the source of light in a familiar room had been quite changed, so that, although everything was in its usual place, the shadows all fell differently. Finally Matey, aware that time was flying, glanced at her watch and asked, "Mimi, you haven't said anything yet about your boys. Your mother will be sure to ask me what you reported about them."

The other woman did not answer for an instant. Then she said in a constrained voice, "My boys are very well. . . . You can tell Maman that I said that." She added immediately, the words seeming to burst out, "Mété, I must give my children more than my parents gave me. I must! I *can't* leave them as Maman and Papa left us."

Matey heard every shade of the mingled exaltation and bitterness in the voice, but had not the faintest clew as to the meaning of the words. Too astonished to think of any rejoinder, she remained silent, searching the other's face for an explanation.

At the moment came a knock on the door. When she opened it Matey saw there a plump elderly nun, her black draperies sweeping the ground, the white quilled ruffling of the net under her black coif casting a pearly shadow down on her finely wrinkled red cheeks and innocent round eyes.

"Oh, yes," called Mimi from the room, "it is Sœur Sainte Julienne. This is our old friend Mme. Fort from America, *ma sœur*. Mété, this is Sister Sainte Julienne, who is coming to help out your poor war widow." They shook hands, Matey liking on sight the open-faced old country-woman. "How *is* the poor thing?" asked the nun, coming in, "Does she seem to take at all a liking to it, here?"

They looked out of the window. The woman in widow's weeds was standing under the bare branches of the apple tree. The dead black of her dress and veil brought out singingly the life in the autumn colors about her, the rich brown of the plowed garden, the yellow stubble in the sleeping field beyond. She lifted her face and looked up into the tree. Inside the house they watched her anxiously. Finally, as if something had been asked and answered between them, she stepped closer to it and laid a black gloved hand on its thick strong trunk. The three in the house drew a long breath.

"How did you ever think of this, Mété?" asked Mimi, turning away from the window.

"I don't know," said Matey.

All during the jolting night trip back to Paris Matey was thinking about the new vitality which glowed from Mimi and wondering what those mysterious words of hers meant. Only one thing became evident. It was nothing to ask Mme. Vinet about.

With Mme. Letellier gone there was one errand less. But there were always plenty of new ones. The army of refugees grew larger all the time. There were many organizations now to care for refugees, some American ones, and a good deal of what Matey and Mme. Vinet had to do was to steer refugee families to the right *œuvres* and then watch over them to clear up possible bad feeling. There was a good deal of that. Refugees were always nerve-sick, either half crazed by their sense of injury or, more often, deadened and starved into an incredible apathy, so that you needed, Matey sometimes thought, not only to provide food for them, but almost to put it into their mouths. On the other side, the devoted heads of the various charitable organizations, both French and American, were often leisure-class women for whom this was the first contact with reality and work and the first perilous experience of being in authority. The never-ending work of trying to restore to life those mutilated human organisms was, naturally enough, broken sometimes by explosions of ungrateful ill-will on one side and mean tyranny and favoritism on the other, all to the tune, perhaps, of an air-raid overhead, or news of a great German offensive which might sweep them all into the ranks of refugees.

The days went laggingly by, shortening with intolerable slowness the period of waiting till Adrian’s first furlough. This had been put off several times, first because of the launching of an offensive on the front where he served (to the women in the rear offensives meant always “no furloughs”) and after that for various exasperating exhibitions of *paperasseries* and military red-tape.

At the apartment other men on leave came and went, a strange mixture of personalities, castes, and abilities, but with a few never-varying traits in common, such as their intense dislike of people who called them “defenders of civilization,” their profound silence on the subject of exploding shells, bayonet attacks, trench life—war in general—and their deep concern over the state of their underwear. Matey knew little about their adventures with machine-guns, but she was accurately acquainted with the condition of the shirts, socks, and drawers of every *poilu* on her list. They were always either thanking her for a fresh supply just sent, hinting hesitatingly that the old articles were giving out, or exulting in the distribution to their regiment of a new lot of shirts; “so send socks and drawers now, Mme. Fort.”

Samples of all provinces and all trades passed through Henri’s room which was now their guest-room. One week Matey and Mme. Vinet struggled to make conversation with a dull, silent, kind, forty-year-old coal-miner from the North, a raw-bone Fleming, whose wife and little boy, if still alive, were beyond the German lines. He was happiest on leave, M. Plon, if they ha some small household job waiting for him, a shelf to put up, a latch to repair. The week after his visit there would be no difficulty at all about conversation with a brilliant, cynical-talkin young dandy, who had been a student in Henri’s classes, a bo from a wealthy family of Lille. He wanted little of Paris vacations except long mornings in bed, a chance to renew his acquaintance with his hairdresser and raw Palais-Royal farces a night. Like many young soldiers on leave, he had a horror of bein alone, and once in a while when gayer company was not to be ha he pressed his hostesses into service as theater companions. Matey sometimes sat there by him, feeling, as the boy laughed half hysterically and applauded loudly, how opium-like to his despair and loneliness was the gay, rank obscenity on the stage.

After such a week they entertained, perhaps, the dour, silent Breton farm-hand, brother of the absent cook, who much preferred Dominiqua's society and conversation about live stock to anything Mme. Vinet or Matey could do for him. His particular grudge against the world was the language of the newspaper reporters. "Our chivalrous *poilus*, the fighting blood of old Gaul blazing like liquid fire in their veins, were hardly to be restrained by their officers from swarming up over the top before the hour set for the offensive." To Dominiqua, washing dishes, he would read out such a passage in an angry tone, striking the paper contemptuously with the side of his hand, and spitting scornfully into the ash-can. "I'd like to have one of those pen-pushers in the trenches! He'd see how hard it is to restrain us from going into an attack ahead of time. He'd see . . ."

Finally came Dominiqua's Jeannot, whom Matey had last seen as a baby on his mother's shoulder. He was by far the most dashing of all the men they saw, a hard-bitten, handsome, swaggering, front-line fighter, recklessly outspoken in his detestation of the war and its makers. "There'll be a strike if this business goes on another year . . . a strike of soldiers. Do you know the name for a strike of soldiers, Mme. Fort? It's called a mutiny. And we'll drive the Cabinet Ministers and the people who write books about war up to the front to take our places." Very good to his mother, Jean Iturbe, and delightfully frolicsome with Petella and Brother. But then every one of their military guests loved to play with the children. Matey often thought the children were of more use to these embittered, enduring men than all the rest of them put together, with their packages of wool socks and cigarettes and chocolate.

And finally, shortly before Adrian was due, Henri came for his week of respite. His mother went, pale with excitement, to meet him at the Gare de l'Est, and came back, a girl's color in her thin elderly face, walking so close to him that her black dress was stained by the mud plastered and caked to the tops of his heavy clumping boots. Mimi came up from La Ferté for a few hours when Henri was there, the first time she had been to Paris since Matey had arrived. Matey had a little wondered at this, since the trip was really a short one. She was perhaps too busy with this tremendous effort of hers to save her husband's business. From what she told them she seemed to be making a great success of it. Indeed she talked of little but the problem of adapting her machinery to turn out shell fuses. She made several inquiries about American screw-cutting lathes and micrometer calipers, which Matey, to her shame, was quite incapable of answering.

"Why, Mimi, you remind me of Tante Caroline!" said Henri, laughing, and explained to Matey that one of his father's aunts, left a widow, had been a master hand at managing her husband's business.

"Yes, I know how Tante Caroline felt," Mimi agreed.

Every one avoided talk of war. It was January of 1916. They felt that France was defeated but would not admit it aloud. Mimi, it seemed, had another topic to avoid, for she sheered off quickly from any talk of her boys. She gave evasive answers to questions as to why she had not brought them and said nothing in particular when her mother spoke sadly of seeing them so little. Finally, in reply to some point-blank questions about their studies from Henri, who as a teacher in a public school was familiar with the courses of the *collège* in La Ferté, she gave a reluctant answer of which a chance turn of phrase revealed the fact that those studies were not being carried on in the secular public school but in the *collège* at Juilly.

"But that is a religious school," said Henri blankly. "Isn't that the one carried on by Jesuits?"

"They're not Jesuits at all!" said Mimi indignantly. "They are priests. And you know it. It's perfectly legal."

"But, *Mimi—!*" said her mother faintly.

Matey remembered the sweet round-eyed old nun she had met in Crouy who seemed such a friend of Mimi's.

So this was what Mimi had meant.

Mimi said hastily, "Now, Maman, I didn't want to tell you that. I knew you'd make a fuss. And there's no use trying to explain it to you. You couldn't understand. I must do what seems best to me for my own children, mustn't I? It's too long a story to tell you anyhow." There was a silence in which Mimi finished her cup of coffee with a defiant air of not noticing anything unusual.

Matey felt herself very much in the way and rose, calling Brother and Petella for a walk. Mimi stood up to say good-by.

She kissed Matey affectionately, evidently holding her apart from what was at issue between her and her mother and brother. "I still can hardly believe you're here, you know, Mété. It's splendid of you and your husband to come! That young war widow seems to be settling down all right at Crouy. *That* was a splendid thing to do, too."

"Give my love to your boys," said Matey, kissing her old comrade.

She walked soberly enough that afternoon behind her romping children under the beautiful shadowy trees of the winter park. How virulently life pursued its way! The war with its mountainous horror and madness was after all but the background for the anthills of personal dissensions. When she went back at dusk, Mme. Vinet had been crying. Henri was at the piano, very delicately playing some Debussy for his mother.

Before he went back to the front that time, he went out with Matey one day into the Luxembourg, strolling with her behind the prancing children. They talked a little of old times and how she had taught them baseball and of Petella's French, which was, after all, turning out better than Brother's, and of the fact that Henri's mother was once more giving some music lessons, and how steadying this was to her nerves. Matey could see that he was trying to say something else and guessed that it was about Mimi. But because it was something very deep and close to him he did not know how to speak of it. In all his rainbow-colored vocabulary of sophisticated words he could find none transparent enough to show what was in his heart. Nor could Matey help him. She could only admire the skill of Adrian and his father. She had not at all learned their secret. In the end she and Henri said nothing at all, walking together in wistful intimate silence up and down under the leafless winter trees.

From the front he wrote her guardedly, not mentioning Mimi by name, about great changes which the war with its strain and anxieties brought to personalities, changes which might or might not be permanent, but which brought new pain to those who had already suffered bereavements from death. "I am more thankful than ever before that Maman has one daughter with her," he ended.

Matey laid down the letter, wondering, as she had so often in the past, at the harsh rigor of French differences of opinion. For it seemed no more to her. "With all of us more or less at death's door, why should Henri and his mother make themselves miserable over this!" she thought in astonishment. "Why not let everybody do as he thinks best without getting tragic over it!"

In answering Henri's letter she asked him this question, muting it to discretion by a careful choice of phrases. But evidently she had not been discreet enough. His answering letter, written under shell-fire in an underground *abri,* with a man dying at his feet, pointedly ignored the subject, had nothing in it but the disgust at the idiocy of the war and the self-contempt at being a helpless part of it which colored all letters from French intellectuals at the front.

On the most affectionate and intimate terms with Mme. Vinet, Matey expected every day some word from her that would make it possible to say something of the sort to her. But Mme. Vinet never mentioned it.

She felt that not only in her letter to Henri but in all her letter-writing she was less and less successful. Adrian from the front wrote only to her and to his father. Matey made an effort to keep all the Rustdorf circle, neighbors as well as her family, in touch with the doings in France, but the daily entries in her journal-letter grew more and more dry and concise.

"Just back from Crouy tonight, where I'd been to take that young Mme. Letellier I've written about. Think of buying a whole house, ever so small a one, and a garden and a little field for $540. Young Mme. Letellier seemed to like it very well."

"Petella came home from the *lycée* the other day saying an appeal had been sent out to all the school-children to ask their parents to help save from starvation the Russian prisoners in the German prison-camps. We are to save every scrap of bread that is not used at table, dry it, and send it to the *lycée,* where it will be put together in big packages and sent (by means of the Swiss Red Cross) into Germany."

"Henri has been back. His *permissions* are filled with music. He or his mother or both of them are before the piano most of the time. Henri's hands look like a day laborer's now. And he's in almost constant pain from sciatica. A good many professional men, no longer young, get sciatica from their life at the front. But he hasn't lost his delicate touch. I often wish Padre could hear him. He still makes me feel like a pile-driver."

She fell back on items about the children, always interesting to aunts and grandfathers. "Brother is as amusing as ever. The other day he showed me Dominiqua's rosary lying on the kitchen table, and said, struggling to get it into English so Dominiqua wouldn't understand, 'You see zat necklace? Zat's ze necklace what Dominiqua love God by.' He can't pronounce his *th*'s any more than any other little French boy. He pronounces his own nickname now as Dominiqua does, 'Brozzer,' with a very much rolled *r*."

Mostly she commented on news from home. "We read all your letters aloud over and over, especially to Brother, who is beginning to forget home. Petella tries hard to keep it fresh in his mind. I hear her asking him, 'When you go down the kitchen steps, what grows in the flower-bed on the right-hand side?' And 'Under which tree is Sumner's grave?' It is so good of Aunt Tryntje and Rebecca to look out for the things in our house. How could moths have got into our bedding-closet!

"Francis, have you ever thought that Emily's health might be helped by a stay in a good sanatorium?"

Dull stuff, her letters home. And she found it increasingly hard to write even as much as that.

To tell them what was really happening about her—to describe the effects of the war as they touched the people she saw—she could not even begin. To give them any idea of the moral atmosphere in which she lived, the brooding dread against which they daily drew the frail outline of their lives—she had no words. Adrian's father had been right. There was no use talking about it.

10

SHE had lived to see it dawn, the day of Adrian's return for his first furlough. But the time from dawn until his train was due was almost as hard to live through as all those weeks and months. She had too carefully finished her work ahead of time so that she should be free for his visit. It would have been better to save some of those endless tasks for today rather than to wander around the apartment, looking in at the children's room, looking in at the kitchen, looking at her watch and thinking it must have been stopped.

"Sit down, child!" said Mme. Vinet finally. "You'll wear yourself out." She sat down and took the everlasting knitting from the older woman's hands.

"But what shall *I* do?"

"Go play something for me," implored Matey.

She sat knitting fast and listening to Bach, once more stating honestly the complexity of all things and once more showing that in the end they are but harmonious parts of the whole. The room was filled with the intelligent beauty of that comforting voice. At the end, "How it does one good!" breathed Mme. Vinet. They were painfully sensitive to music in those days.

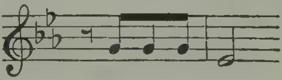
"It's one of the things I owe to you," said Matey.

"You have repaid it—dear child," murmured the woman before the piano.

"Have you still, do you suppose, that old piano arrangement for the Fifth Symphony that you and Henri used to play years ago?" asked Matey.

"Why, certainly I have it. Come and play the bass with me."

They began bravely:



But they could get no further. Streaming up from the notes came the past—it was Henri who sat there beside his mother, Henri the other half of her soul. Back of them sat the little girls, Mimi gentle and loving, Ziza, ardent Ziza with her great gifts for joy and suffering. And the baby Paul slept in his cradle in the next room. The two women sat motionless, staring at the familiar notes on the page as if they were ghosts.

Dominiqua put her head in at the door, and asked, "Pardon, Madam Mété, does Monsieur like garlic with his leg of lamb?"

"*Non, non, non, non!*" cried Matey, springing up, horrified at the idea of something wrong in Adrian's first meal at home. "*No* garlic in *anything!*"

She looked at her watch again. It was really not too early to begin to get the children's wraps on. There were so many protections to be put on against this steady February rain.

They plodded from the Métro station into the Gare de l'Est, blue with soldiers ending or beginning their furloughs, camping out on the benches, smoking, eating, waiting for their trains.

Matey put down her dripping umbrella and asked an employee which was the exit for soldiers returning *en permission*. He looked appraisingly at her bourgeois hat and gloves and asked, "Officer or common soldier?"

"Ambulance driver," said Matey. "An American driving an ambulance attached to the Third Army."

The man shrugged his shoulders, quite blank as to the status of an American. "Does he rank as an officer or a common soldier?"

"I haven't any idea," said Matey, surprised. "Why?"

"Officers come out this exit, common soldiers out of the side door around the corner," he announced and went his way.

Matey and Petella were thrown into helpless agitation by this news. Which door should they choose? Suppose he took the other one. It would be too horrible to miss him after all. If only they had brought Mme. Vinet! But it was too late to get her now.

Matey, undone with excitement, lost her head and was ready to cry. Petella took command. "I'll stay here, Mother, and you and Brother go round to the side door."

"But I can't leave you alone in such a crowd . . . in a city!" cried poor Matey. "You're only seven years old!"

"I'll be all right," said Petella. "I'll stand right here and hold on to this railing. And if he comes here, I'll holler to him and we'll go round and meet you."

Matey dared not agree and dared do nothing else. The train was almost due. She kissed Petella and told her, "Don't you *stir* from there on any account unless Father comes," and went away, looking back anxiously at the valiant little figure, lost in the midst of the great echoing hall and the crowds of roughly hurrying grown-ups.

Putting up her umbrella again, she ran hurriedly with Brother along the street to the side door, the slimy February mud spattering the little boy's leggings and his mother's skirts. There could be no doubt where to go. A silent crowd of women and children stood in the mud and rain, looking fixedly at a large door in the wall. Most of them were working-people who did not carry umbrellas but protected themselves from the rain sketchily with black woolen scarves over their heads, or the hoods of their dark-blue capes. Matey and her little son joined them. "It *is* here for common soldiers returning from the front?" she asked the woman next her, who nodded without taking her eyes from the dingy painted panels of the door.

They waited, stepping from one foot to the other, shifting babies from shoulder to shoulder. Matey began to tremble. She saw that an old woman near her was shaking so that she could scarcely stand. "Take my arm, Madame," she murmured, and stood more firmly herself then, steadied by Brother's pull at her hand and the weight of old age on the other arm.

"Will I know Adrian when I see him?" she thought. It seemed years since she had been his wife, had been a person at all.

She started when an employee flung the door open. The roar and clatter of a moving train poured out loudly as if the open door were a trumpet. The women fixed their eyes on it. Matey felt their silent patience rise to a passion. She too, for her life, could not have looked away.

Heavy, rapid footsteps were heard. An unshaven, unhandsome middle-aged little Frenchman stepped through the door, his ill-fitting uniform of coarse blue cloth smeared with yellow mud, his hulking shapeless shoes caked with it to their tops.

"Maurice!" cried a woman's voice hysterically, and "Oh, Papa! *Papa!*" a child's. A beautiful smile came over his insignificant face. He took one long step forward and was gone in the crowd. Another had appeared behind him, long and lean and rustic. "Pierre! *Ici!* Pierre!" some one called fervently from the back of the crowd, and every one stepped back to let a weeping woman in a shawl fling herself into his arms.

They came all at once then, three or four crowding through the door together. The crowd surged forward and back; there were cries and tears and laughter; babies were transferred from women's to men's shoulders; Matey and Brother and the old woman were jostled from side to side by heedless reunited couples.

And then it was over. The open door stood empty, only a trickle of small railroad noises coming from it, the slow rumble of a baggage-truck, the distant hoot of a train. A handful of women still stood waiting under the rain. An employee came to shut the door. "All out of that train," he said, adding not unkindly, "Next train in from the east front due at two o'clock tomorrow morning." He shut the door. The women turned away, two of them sobbing.

"Adrian is evidently not ranked as a common soldier," thought Matey.

"But where is my son!" said the old woman on her arm.

"Perhaps he came through the other exit," suggested Matey trying not to show her impatience.

"No, he always comes through this door. I always meet him here."

Matey's heart contracted at that "always." Could she live through this *again!* She struggled against her impulse to drop the old arm and run to Petella. "Perhaps he will come on the next train?" she said.

"Perhaps," muttered the old woman tonelessly, dropping her head and standing motionless in the rain. Matey noticed that she looked very poor. "Won't you let me offer you a hot supper while you wait?" she asked, pointing to a restaurant across the street. "You could eat it by the window so that you would not lose sight of the door."

She hurried her to the table by the window, left a bill from Aunt Connie by her plate, shook hands with her, and, Brother galloping at her side, spattered around through the mud to the waiting-room. It was almost empty. Petella, a little pale, stood there steadfastly, her eyes, very wide, fixed eagerly on the door to the street.

"Oh, wasn't he at your door, either?" she cried quaveringly.

Matey's heart began to pound. Her suspense recoiled upon her in a sick reaction from hope. She felt driven half crazy by all these dependents on her, old women, little children—for whom she must show qualities she did not have. She would have given anything to be alone, free to weep aloud, to be weak and desperate as she was. It was frightful to be grown up.

"Oh, Father probably missed the train," she said lightly in a reassuring voice to Petella. "You know he's always late." It was in fact one of the family jokes.

With a crackle of her nerves it occurred to her that this might be true. Adrian must have been slow in getting ready, as he often was, and have missed the train. She flared with anger. How could he do such a thing when he knew how anxious they would be! To have missed *such* a train! All the times in the past when he had been late and she had been prompt rose up from oblivion and heaped themselves to a mountainous grievance.

"Well, what do you say, dears, shall we walk part way home and look in at the windows instead of taking the Métro here?" she asked the children in a cheerful tone.

But the first window displayed beaded funeral wreaths with

"A mon mari, mort sur le champ d'honneur" on a good many of them. As if some one had struck her a blow in the chest Matey thought gaspingly, "Adrian may be dead this minute. May have been hit with a shell on his last trip to the front-line dressing-station. When I get back to the apartment I may find a telegram. . . ."

"Children, don't you think it would be fun to take a taxi, for a treat?" The cheerfulness of her voice was wearing thin. Petella looked at her anxiously. Darling little daughter! Matey, unstrung with anxiety, was afraid that in another moment she would lay her head on her little daughter's shoulder and burst into tears. She looked fixedly out of the cab window and let Petella restrain Brother from dashing himself out of the windows as he careered about, "playing bear."

But there was no telegram at the apartment. Only a rich unwonted odor of roast meat, and Mme. Vinet and Dominiqua running to welcome in the *permissionaire,* very much startled that he had not come. Matey read in Mme. Vinet's disappointed face another explanation of Adrian's non-appearance, something Matey had not thought of, although she was as familiar with the possibility now as Mme. Vinet. Another big offensive had perhaps started suddenly and again *permissions* indefinitely recalled. At this idea she sank down in a chair, all her strength gone. "I *couldn't* wait another month!" she thought. Dominiqua went back to the kitchen to change her plans for dinner, and Matey pulled Brother up on her lap to take off his muddy leggings. Her hands trembled so she could not unbutton them. "Sit *still,* Brother!" she said tearfully, although the weary child had not stirred.

"I'll unbutton them!" cried Petella, springing forward.

There was a knock on the outer door. Hearing Dominiqua step to open, they all froze into listening statues. The door opened, a murmur of voices, a *"Oui, Monsieur"* from Dominiqua. The door to the living-room opened. A slight, pale, unshaven man in a muddy uniform stood there, his great shoes caked with mud. As he looked at Matey and the children a beautiful smile came to his lips.

"Adrian!" cried Matey, incredulously, springing up from her seat.

"Father!" shouted Petella, running to throw her arms around his knees.

"C'est mon papa," explained Brother proudly, with a Gallic sweep of his little hand, to Mme. Vinet, who had snatched at him as his mother let him fall.

"But how *did* you get here without our seeing you!" demanded Matey breathlessly, her arms still around his neck. She hardly knew what she was saying.

"Two sections to the train," explained Adrian.

"Why didn't the man at the Gare tell us?"

"Didn't know, probably—I'll bet he didn't try to find out very hard."

Matey's taut nerves snapped. She cried out angrily, "Adrian, how *like* you to miss the first one! Can't you ever get anywhere on time!"

Before even the ugly echo of this greeting had time to reach her ears, she turned sick. What answer could a man make to such a woman save to turn and leave her forever!

Well, she had forgotten him, it seemed, had in her hysterical loss of any sense of proportion forgotten that he never lost his. His answer was not in the least to turn and leave her. It was given with a grin. "The stars in their courses, Matey, didn't seem to care as much about my *permission* as I did. It's been quite a day. First the *camionette* I started on bust a rear axle. I bummed a ride on a R.V.F. truck and bribed the driver with cigarettes to step on the gas. Got to Bar-le-Duc. More cigarettes to the Maréchal des Logis to stamp my papers in a hurry. Got out on the platform just in time to see the train I expected to take breezing through like the Empire State passing Rustdorf. Mob of *permissionaires*—me too—acting like the mob in *Julius Caesar.* Despair. Then along comes another train. Somebody calls out 'Chalons! Epernay! Paris!' and we all surge on, several hundred of us. Packed like sardines. First I stood on one foot and then on the other; there wasn't room for both. Anyway here I am." The clasp of his arms tightened about her. He had not even listened to her poor wrong words except to recognize them as part of the strain of her longing for him. Adrian was not a dream, after all.

He looked well, they began to say then, all talking at once—rather pale from driving at night and sleeping by day. But quite like himself. Quite like all men back from the front too, in that his first thought was for a bath. They had the flat tin tub ready in the little *cabinet de toilette,* the reservoir of the cookstove full of hot water. Matey laid out clean underwear—bought at the department store in Rustdorf!—and while he bathed went into the kitchen. For weeks she had been planning and replanning what to have for that first dinner and had run all over Paris to find the ingredients for the Boston brown bread and the pancakes.

But after all Adrian did not eat much of it. "I spoiled my appetite with bread and cheese in the train. I'm afraid I can't do justice to dinner," he said apologetically at the last.

Matey's heart sank in alarm. She lost her head again. She saw herself as perhaps she looked to Adrian with her elaborate dinner to celebrate his homecoming, trivial—or callous. He would despise her. From his letters it had been evident that he had been profoundly affected by what he saw at the front. Perhaps he had grown away from her, would feel that her wildness of longing for him was grasping and personal, indecorous in the midst of tragedy. In a flash she imagined him grown like his father, old, remote, disembodied, beyond passion, beyond her, lost to her . . . and because she imagined him so, she knew he was so. Mme. Vinet said, "You two haven't had a moment to yourselves yet. Let me put the children to bed."

Petella and Brother said hastily *merci bien, Bonnemaman,* but they *would* like Father too, because there were certain things he always did, a certain story he always told, the same, only different. . . . "Putting the children to bed is one of the things I'm here for," Adrian said.

"He doesn't *want* to be alone with me," thought Matey, wildly.

He helped the children undress with a great deal of noisy play, he tucked them up, told them an installment of a serial saga o his invention, in which Brother figured as an elephant tame and Petella an explorer in African jungles, and afterward according to the tradition which dated before the beginning o the children's memories, said, "Now I'm going to sit here and hop you'll always be good children," and sat between their beds i the dark, holding in each of his hands the small warm hand of drowsy child.

After a time, "This is a *sort* of 'Meeting,' Brother," Petella' voice came sleepily through the darkness.

"J'aime ça alors," murmured the little boy.

Their father stood up finally, felt his way to the door, an stepped out into the hallway. The apartment was quiet. No light in the living-room; Mme. Vinet had humanely gone to bed. He drew a long breath.

He turned out the gas in the hall and opened the door to his wife's room. At the sound she turned, tall in her white nightgown, her beautiful wide gray eyes, dark with emotion, fixed on his.

He gave a cry, "Why, it's true! I'm here!" And went toward her, trembling like a bridegroom.

She came into his arms like a bride.

"Well, M. Fort," said Mme. Vinet the next morning, surprised to find Adrian up and dressed at the hour of the children's early breakfast. "Think of seeing a man from the front, *en permission*, awake before noon." She herself never could eat a mouthful before the arrival of the mail and Henri's daily letter and was now walking around and around the apartment in her usual morning restlessness, looking at the clock, trying to think of small tasks, picking up loose ends. Returning from the hallway with the children's wraps and overshoes in her arms, she asked him, "What are you going to do to amuse yourself in these precious few days? It's always interesting to us to see the different ways the soldiers take to get the good of their *permissions*."

"What am I going to do to amuse myself? I'm not going to let my wife out of sight, of course," said Adrian, tying Brother's napkin around his neck.

"Oh, goody!" said Petella. "Will you take us to school when she does?"

"Sure thing," said her father. "Wherever Mother goes you're going to see a new shadow beside her."

Brother, who still understood English, made a little joke. "A *lady's* shadow in trousers!" he said in French, shaking his head over his orange.

Adrian burst into a laugh, the first since he had come back. "The little scalawag!" he cried, turning to Matey.

Brother was enchanted with the new word. *"Scadavague! Scadavague!"* he cried proudly, laying a plump hand on his breast. *"Je suis un petit scadavague!"*

The hours spent in the children's world were gay hours for Adrian as for all the men on leave. But they were the only gay ones. There was no gayety in the painful excited happiness of their hours together, a happiness which ran the scale from the hungry passion which flung them wildly into each other's arms as if to make up by present ardor for all those arid past and future months of separation, down to the mere home-like sharing of such uninteresting jobs as carrying packages of mail for the front to the branch post office near them. There were, too, certain hours of comforting tiresome homely reality when they talked over accounts. They seemed almost home again in Rustdorf in those matter-of-fact porings over bills and budgets. Matey was sole treasurer of their fund, and got out her records to see if Adrian could not help her to plan with more foresight. But of course the one element necessary for foresight was lacking—any sort of notion of how long they would be required to hold out. The war was then in its nineteenth month. "It can't last much longer," Matey often affirmed, making a statement out of a wish.

"How much are you spending, altogether?" asked Adrian.

"At the rate of $250 a month," said Matey anxiously. "We keep down our own expenses as closely as we can. But food, both here and what we send in packages to the front, is more expensive all the time. And we have so many men coming and going whose only chance it is for decent meals. And of course, though it was a great bargain, a lump sum out like the price of the Letellier house brings up the average. I can't make it less. It'll be more, even; the children must have some new clothes. They are growing so fast."

She thought she saw his eyelids drooping in the perpetual drowsiness that was the most visible effect of his night driving, and left him to take a nap in his chair as he did at intervals during the day, no matter what was happening. But when she stepped back half an hour later, he said as though he had been turning the matter over in his mind, "Well, I'm damned if I can screw expenses down any more closely either." (One of the things he brought back from the front was a new habit of copious profanity, apparently quite unconscious.) "In fact I'd like to spend more. There are often chances to help—families still living in the war zone, with children. And I'd like to send something every month to Marceau's family in Lyons."

"Oh, do take more, if you have ways to use it," cried Matey. "The war must be over soon. Everybody says so. By next autumn, at the latest!"

Adrian began to make figures on a piece of paper. "At this rate, with the interest, diminishing though that is, we'd last for four years," he said.

"You mean the *money'd* last," said Matey desperately. *"We* couldn't! Oh, Adrian! Four years! It's not thinkable!"

"No, damned if I believe it," said Adrian considering the calculations on his paper. "I don't believe anybody'd last that long. I think it would be safe to spend more."

Matey thought of what Aunt Connie's money had done and exclaimed, "Adrian, wouldn't it have been too awful if we had stayed at home!"

A bleak expression came into his eyes.

She said, shocked, "Adrian, you don't ever wish we had!"

He laid the paper carefully down on the table. "I often wish I could give up and lie down in my grave," he said in a low voice.

Matey brought up hastily a familiar defense of her own against that thought. "But, Adrian, don't you feel it a great consolation that we are doing what we can to help?"

"God! *no!*" said Adrian with a bitterness that made her tone sound smug. "What the hell does it matter about us, compared to what's going on?"

She clung to something she felt was real. "But it *is* better—at least a little better—at least for us—because we are doing what—"

"It might have been better for us if we had never been born," said the man from the front, "and hadn't brought two more human beings into the world."

Matey was shocked into silence. But she was not shaken. Something had risen up, some sustaining certainty that had been—she saw it now—at the far back of her every thought about the war. Yes, even in the worst moments. That day last month when she sat in the hospital beside a dying man, taking his messages for his children, and on leaving him had passed between two ghastly rows of wounded men, fixing their death-shadowed eyes on her—when she had come out into the street, she had leaned against the hospital wall unable to stand, weeping all the tears of her heart. But they had been tears of sorrow, not of despair.

Adrian broke the silence to say in his father's dry, self-controlled voice, "I don't feel that way all the time, of course. In fact almost never on my top layer. I didn't mean to say it. It gives much too melodramatic an impression. I get along all right.

Mostly my thoughts are quite taken up with wondering whether I remembered to put grease in the differential, or whether the engine is hitting on four. I forget all about what I'm carrying —you wouldn't think it possible, but I do—then we hit a bump and some one behind groans and calls out '*Doucement*,' and I drive very carefully for a while until I forget again. It's the forgetting that keeps me from going insane—until all of a sudden something makes you wake up and realize what's going on. I'll tell you—we've got a big map in the mess-shanty, with pins to show the lines. The other day the *communiqué* reported a British gain, and I was moving pins forward and feeling good about it . . . then it came to me what the eighth of an inch of map must have been like, with the barrage and the machine-gun fire and the wounded screaming themselves to death. . . . I was so ashamed of myself that I wanted to cut my throat."

He laid his hand gently on her knee and went on more calmly. "Don't pay too much attention to what I'm saying, Matey; I'm tired, I guess. You mustn't think I'm suffering or a hero. The danger doesn't amount to much, and as for hardship, we live like princes compared to the infantry. More often than not we're positively gay at the section—get up parties, play cards and sing, and up at the *poste de secours* we swap yarns with the *brancardiers*. There are lots of times, too, when I'm carried away by the men at the front. They are amazing—what they can stand and go ahead. It gives you a new conception of what's possible And just as a spectacle it's beyond anything. The other day—our section was driving in the daytime last week, from the field hospital back to the base hospital—I had two German wounded in the ambulance. As I started up a hill I saw pouring over the sky-line down toward me a French regiment going up to the front. They went by me—it was magnificent, Matey! There's no hurrah, you know, along the front, no brass bands, no cheap banging on nerve centers, just a thousand silent resolute men, slogging steadily along too—" He was silent, his lips twisting into sick, ugly grimace that looked like disgust.

Matey said quickly, "Adrian, after all, they *are*, aren't they marching forward to die for what they think is right?"

He corrected the formula with a dry fierce grimness, "Or murder for it. They don't all of them die. A good many of them kill." His voice rose. "People always forget that, Matey. I'm no going to have my wife forget it! Those that don't die have generally seen to it that some other fellow has."

He drew his hand down over his face as if he were trying to wipe away the violence which in spite of himself had come into his expression and went on in a lower tone, "When we got to the hospitals one of the Germans was dead. He looked like a nice little kid gone to sleep. But I suppose he had killed other nice little kids too, before one of them killed him."

He looked away from his wife, down at the floor, "Some days I can't make anything out of it at all. But there are plenty of others when I understand it all right, when we all seem to be demons in one big hell, and the truth is that there is nothing strong in life but the wish to hurt."

Matey knew then what had been the old base of the sustaining certainty she had and Adrian had not. She confounded in one hot impulse of compassion her husband sickened in a blood-smeared world and the little girl sickening over the intonation of a voice. She burst out to Adrian, her voice breaking in her intensity, "No, Adrian, no! That's not all. You mustn't think that's all. We couldn't live a minute if it were all. That wish to hurt—it doesn't mean there's nothing but hate! Compared to what's underneath, what keeps us alive—a belonging-together of us all that's so much greater—that'll last—outlast anything—outlast the worst in us—and stand up in the face of death!" No, she couldn't get it into words. She never could.

Adrian found some words for her. As he looked into her passionately moved face his own softened. He quoted under his breath, "Despairer, here is my neck. By God, you shall not go down." He put out his hand to take hers.

There was a hurried knocking at the door. Before Matey could open it Mme. Vinet flung it open and burst in, her face, usually pale and steady, distorted by joy. *"Mété, Mété!"* she cried, waving a letter. Adrian and Matey had the same thought: "Ziza has been found."

"Henri is wounded!" cried Henri's mother exultantly. "In the arm! In the arm—a beautiful arm-wound. He's to be sent to a hospital here in Paris. Tomorrow! It will take at least six weeks before it will be healed. Six weeks! Six weeks!" She began to cry and flung her arms around Matey, sobbing out, "Six weeks! He will be safe for six weeks!"

Over her shoulder, Matey saw Adrian's face take on again the bleak stony expression that made him look like another man.

Adrian went back to the front on February 21. The newspaper of the next morning announced the terrific bombardment which began the siege of Verdun.

II

MATEY did not know—never did know till he returned for a leave—along which front Adrian's ambulance section was working, but during the endless spring of 1916 his brief and irregular bulletins of incessant activity sounded as though he were near Verdun. Dominiqua did not hear from Jean for a fortnight at a time that spring and went about like a woman in a trance. Henri's beautifully broken arm had lasted until May. Then he too had disappeared into the furnace, his letters no longer arriving every morning, sometimes not arriving till after many days of silence.

No men had returned on furlough for many weeks.

Death after death had struck into their circle. The boy from Lille who put perfume on his hair and loved good clothes and Palais-Royal farces was part of the human chaff blown into eternity at Douaumont. Louis Plon, the illiterate home-loving exiled coal-miner from the North who loved to put up shelves and mend broken locks, was sent from Mort Homme to one hospital after another, dying in Paris with Mme. Vinet beside him. The stubbornly land-loving Breton farm-hand lay down in the earth forever at Avocourt. The last remaining son of Petella's widowed teacher in the *lycée,* the two younger brothers of Mimi's husband, the only son of the family in the apartment below them, were killed and buried. Matey had walked beside Mme. Vinet in one funeral procession after another. She shed no tears. And neither did Mme. Vinet, leaning heavily on her arm, limping and faltering as she walked, like an old woman. They were below—or above—beyond, perhaps—the realms where tears could fall.

During the evenings as long as the children were awake they kept some aspect of quiet and cheerfulness. Mme. Vinet often substituted music for words, as she had for her own children and Matey. On some evenings Matey sat with Brother on her lap, Petella leaning against her knees, Dominiqua knitting across the room, Mme. Vinet at the piano, until it was bedtime for the children. Sometimes she said to Mme. Vinet, "Play something a little louder, won't you, please?" Although it was materially impossible many women in Paris that spring heard in quiet moments a ghostly roar from the guns of Verdun.

After the children had gone to bed this sounded louder, sometimes rose till they thought an air-raid was beginning. The hours after the children had gone to sleep were hard ones. The three women sat up till all hours, knitting or sewing or reading, or frankly pacing up and down in uncontrollable anxiety. The nights of air-raids were almost the best, putting, as they did, something else to think about into the dark hours of waiting. But after these periods of wakefulness there always came a blessed time when the body claimed its rights, and they slept deeply, as if this nightmare, as if life itself, were over at last.

It was from such a death-like sleep on a hot night in early June that Matey started up and sat for an instant in her bed. "Aunt Tryntje? Is that you?" she called.

The present struck her out of bed and into the hall. She had begun to fumble for the gas-jet beside the door when she woke to the possibility that it might be the *concierge,* come with a telegram from the front. With nothing but Verdun in her mind she flung the door open.

It was not the *concierge.* In the dim light on the landing stood a small stooped woman in shabby clothes, a battered hat casting a deep shadow over her face. She held a young baby over one shoulder and seemed to hold the hand of an older child, half hidden behind her skirts.

Matey's tall figure with long brown hair streaming over the shoulders was not apparently what she had expected. She said falteringly, half turning to go, "Mme. Vinet, then, is no longer here?" Matey knew her then. *"Ziza!"* she screamed.

Her cry, echoing down the corridor, brought Mme. Vinet. She called out as she ran down the hall, and Matey answered, she did not know what, and stood back. She hurried to make a light and drew gently inside the door the two women locked in each other's arms. The sleeping baby did not stir, but the little boy slipped away like a shadow into a corner of the room and sat down on the floor behind a chair.

Now she could see the yellow-gray face of the woman who had Ziza's voice. She was startled. It did not look at all like Ziza. Nothing in eyes, mouth, or expression was like Ziza. And it was evident that the newcomer did not know Matey. Over Mme. Vinet's shoulder she was looking strangely at her from sunken eyes.

"It is Mété, little Mété Gilbert, come from America to—" began Mme. Vinet.

The strange woman seemed to hear this and nodded. But after a long look into Matey's face she said, as though she had made the discovery for herself, "Why, it is Mété. What are you doing in France, Mété?" The voice though toneless and without personality, was recognizably Ziza's.

The baby woke up and began to cry. The woman in Mme. Vinet's arms was wavering to and fro. It was no time for explanations.

"I don't suppose you have any milk?" said Ziza, wearily giving up the baby to Matey's outstretched hands.

"Yes, yes, we have plenty!" cried Matey, blessing Aunt Connie. She laid the baby on her bed and ran into the kitchen, where she was setting some milk to warm, when she was aware of a small white figure near her. Petella stood there in her nightgown. Her eyes were open, but her face had a fixed blankness. "Mother," she said earnestly, "didn't I hear the front door open?"

"Yes, dear," said her mother, wondering if the child were really awake. The little girl put her hands together imploringly. "Oh, Mother, *was* it somebody come to say the war is over?" she said, her chin trembling.

Matey drew a long breath and said gently to Petella, turning her around so that she faced the door, "No, dear, it wasn't that. Not this time. Run back to bed, darling."

The child pattered soberly away, and when Matey, a moment later, the bottle of warm milk in her hand, looked into the children's room, Petella was in her bed as sound asleep as her little brother.

Mme. Vinet had led Ziza into the bedroom which had been waiting so long for her and was helping her undress, uttering no words but broken murmurs of compassion.

Where was the little boy? Matey went back into the living-room. There he sat still on the floor, in the corner behind the chair. Holding the fretting baby on one shoulder, she stooped down and said gently, "Don't you want to come with me, dear, and go to bed?"

He did not seem to understand her, looking into her face with no change of expression, as if he did not see her. But when she put out her hand to help him up, he rose quickly with a dreadful docility and followed where she led. "Would you like a drink of milk, dear?" she asked him as they passed the kitchen. He hung down his head and made no answer.

In the door of Ziza's room she asked, "Will it be all right, Ziza dear, to put your little boy to sleep in the children's room near my children?" She spoke guardedly and softly, having the impression that even words were wounding to the exhaustion of the newcomers. Ziza answered in a muffled tone, "I'll have to have the baby here, to take care of her."

"No, oh, *no!*" said Matey with a soft earnestness. "Let me take her! I'd love to."

Ziza made no answer to this for a time. Her mother had put her into bed now and sat, one arm around her, holding a cup of milk to her lips, making her drink it in little sips. When she had finished this she said, in an expressionless voice, "She's not my baby, you know," and lying down, turned her back to them and to the room.

Matey and Mme. Vinet tiptoed into Matey's bedroom, where they managed to feed the baby and to undress the little boy, passive in their hands as a rag doll. They put him into a nightgown of Petella's, vastly too large for him, and tucked him up on an improvised bed on the sofa in the children's room. They said not a word to each other till this was done and they were back in Matey's bedroom, where the sleeping baby was lost in the wide bed.

Matey saw that Mme. Vinet was trembling from head to foot. She put her arms about the small thin figure. "Let me put *you* to bed next, Bonnemaman," she said tenderly.

Mme. Vinet said in a frightened whisper, "Can it really be Ziza?" They went together down the lighted corridor to the door of Ziza's room. It stood ajar. They pushed it gently open. The light fell on the bed, on the face half buried in the pillow. It was relaxed in a profound sleep, and now it was Ziza's face! All that had made it strange and alien and frightening was wiped away. It was little Ziza come back.

Matey slept but little that night. She lay awake, or half awake, on guard against the powers of evil which had eddied blackly in through the door she had opened to the fugitives. Lying in her bed, the frail unknown scrap of humanity beside her, Matey felt the despair and terror brought in by the victims filling the darkness as if with swooping silent bat-wings. She had no fear of them now, nothing but the steadfast certainty that she had grown to be stronger than they.

Once, as she lay planning how to reorganize the daily life, she heard a stir and ran quickly to see what it was. Mme. Vinet was standing in Ziza's doorway, looking in at her, weeping silently. Matey led her back to bed. The older woman leaned to say in Matey's ear, "Do you suppose she has lost her mind *entirely?* Will she ever . . ." They both thought of other refugees from Belgium whom they had known.

Matey answered stout-heartedly, "Inside a month—you'll see—we'll have her just like herself again."

Later, standing guard from her wakeful bed, she thought she heard a faint sound again, and springing up, made the rounds of her little fortress. The sofa-bed in the children's room was empty. The child she had left to sleep in it was gone.

After one wild look at the open window she began to search for him, going very softly in her bare feet not to waken Mme. Vinet. After looking at top speed everywhere, more and more alarmed, it occurred to her to look under Ziza's bed. There he was, far back against the wall, his eyes wide open. When she beckoned to him to come, he crept slowly out on his hands and knees and without a sound followed her back to his bed. After she had tucked him in, Matey stooped and passionately kissed his pale vacant little face. No change of expression came into it.

The black wings swooped boldly low then, beating loudly at her ear. They but fanned her courage till it glowed.

At dawn she roused Dominiqua and sent her out to the nearest telegraph station. The telegrams to Mimi and to Henri were identical, "Ziza returned last night. Very tired and worn but will be all right after rest and good care. Letter with details follows. Mété."

By afternoon of the first day she was putting what few details she had learned into carefully worded letters which went off to La Ferté and the front. After describing the arrival at the door: "Ziza is still exhausted, as was to be expected of course. We are keeping her in bed and don't want to tire her with questions till she has more strength; so I haven't much information to add to my telegram. We don't know yet how she managed to escape and make her way here—she doesn't seem to have a penny with her—nor what has happened to her husband. She has not mentioned him, and we are afraid to till she does. She did tell us that her poor little baby, Henri's namesake, died more than a year ago. The tiny baby girl with her (I took her for not more than four months old, but Ziza says she is nearly eight months) is the child of her young Belgian maid and the German soldier who was quartered in her house. No, not at all what you think. He was, Ziza says, a quiet dull peasant boy, very homesick, who fell in love with Ziza's maid and she with him. He was killed in battle, and the young mother died in Ziza's arms the day after the baby was born.

"Ziza's own little boy shows of course the effects of what he has been through. But there is no cause for alarm. He is so young that he will soon react to good food and good care and the knowledge that he is now in safety. I will write you both frequent bulletins of the invalids. Don't expect too many letters from your mother. She is of course absorbed. . . ."

She looked up from the letter to answer Petella, who came in to say anxiously, "Mother, the new little boy still won't speak to us or look at us. He just crawls off in the corner and hides behind the bookcase."

"Never mind, dear," said Matey; "it'll take time. Just go on playing naturally, you and Brother. He'll get all right, little by little."

But he did not. In Dominiqua's competent hands the baby girl changed from scrawniness to plumpness almost overnight. Under her mother's passion of solicitude Ziza's hollow eyes, sunken cheeks, and strengthless voice changed from one day to the next. But the little Adrien remained the same. They kept Ziza in bed still, and under cover of giving her a complete rest, shut out all four children from her room. She slept most of the time and was still too weak to protest or to doubt them when they said her little son was "doing well."

But he was not doing well. He would eat nothing if any one was in the room with him. He had not said a word nor showed that he understood one. And if left to himself for a moment he still crept into the darkest corner he could find and crouched there, facing the wall, making himself small. The other children with their impetuous movements and clear confident voices seemed to frighten him rather more than the grown-ups. There was but one thing to encourage Matey. Under their brooding care his physical condition improved visibly. The only sound he had made was on the day they tried to put on outdoor wraps to take him for a walk. He had wept then, in a low hushed terrified way that froze Matey's blood, and with weak desperate gestures had plucked off his coat and hat as fast as they tried to put them on. Matey abandoned that plan at once, though she had had great hopes of the fresh air and outdoor exercise.

Dominiqua gave him up. Some weeks after Ziza's return, "You can't do anything for him, M'ame Mété," she said. "I've seen children before who'd had too great a fright. They are always imbecile. There was a little girl in Biriatou who got lost on the mountain overnight. She never so much as knew her own name afterward." This brought Izcohébie Hill back to Matey and her own first encounter with fear, and that other later meeting with war fright, the night on the Garonne, when she had found out that fear felt by grown-ups is not destroying like the terrors of children. She thought that, better than Dominiqua or his grandmother, she understood the sick little boy crouching in his corner. There had been long periods in her youth when she too had crept into a corner and turned her face away from what life seemed to be. And Priscilla, of course . . . She pulled herself up from these thoughts. She was being unjust again.

There was a Zeppelin raid that night, through the noise of which, as usual, the children slept unswervingly, even the new little boy. Also, as usual during air-raids, Matey and Mme. Vinet and Dominiqua wandered about the darkened apartment in wrappers and slippers, saying to each other that perhaps this time they had better take the children down to the basement, and remembering again the current opinion that if an apartment house were struck it would all go, crushing the people in the basement as well. They gave the baby her ten o'clock bottle, thinking it might be her last meal. They looked through cracks in the shutters out into the blackness of the threatened city; they listened to the explosions, trying to decide whether they were farther away or coming closer; they went back to look at the children; they stepped again and again into Ziza's room to tell her that it was just about finished.

Finally, after a long, dead silence, came the first ringing notes from the patrolling *pompiers*, sounding the *berloque* which always signaled the end of an attack. The three tired women stepped in their night-clothes out on the balcony, looking down into the impenetrable blackness below them, from which, like invisible rockets, soared up the voices of the bugles.

Matey went then to take a long drink of water. During the air-raids she was not conscious of being exactly afraid, but afterward she always suffered from an intolerable dryness of the mouth and throat. Dominiqua always said that no Basque was ever afraid of anything mortal, but Matey noticed that her hands were icy-cold and too stiff to use. Mme. Vinet's affliction was more humiliating. While the raid was going on she looked and spoke as usual, but she always had a long attack of nausea when it was over.

By the time, about three in the morning, when the three women finally went to bed, Matey would have said that any memories of her childhood brought up by Dominiqua's remark had been swept away to oblivion. Yet when she fell asleep she instantly began dreaming of Hamilton and the high school there and a play the juniors gave in which she had taken part. She was running down the school corridor calling to a classmate about the hour for a rehearsal when her alarm clock sounded its rattle-snake whir-r-r.

She opened her eyes slowly. A faint gray came in at the window. Summer rain pattered on the floor of the balcony outside. She threw off the bedclothes and slid her feet out of bed, thinking with perfect conviction, "Now I know what to do for little Adrien."

She could hardly wait through the morning routine, and after she had left the children at school, hurried off down the street toward the Seine. She knew where to go—the Quai along which she and Mimi had followed Henri and his mother after the concert years ago, where she had had her first guess at what a heaven might be.

By the middle of the morning, she was back in the children's room at the apartment, the doors closed. The little boy was sitting cross-legged in the corner, facing the wall. "See here, Adrien," she said, kneeling down beside him, "here is a little dog for you. He is going to be yours."

The puppy, wriggling to be free, barked excitedly in his shrill voice. At the new sound the little boy turned his vacant face toward them.

"He's only a baby dog who doesn't know how to take care of himself, so you'll have to look out for him, feed him, and all."

The fuzzy little thing, down on the floor now, explosive with youth, leaped up toward the child's face. Adrien drew back nervously. A flicker of expression passed faintly over his face.

"See, he knows already he belongs to you. He's trying to tell you he's glad he has come to live with you."

The puppy began sniffingly to investigate Adrien's shoe. The child looked down at him.

"Now I've put some milk in a saucer on the table over there. Whenever you think he'd like it, just set it down on the floor where he can get at it."

Partly because she did not dare to examine the child's face and partly out of a sense of decency she turned away from them now and stood up on a chair to dust and rearrange the books on the upper shelves of the bookcase. She had dusted them several times over and put them all back in new places before she heard a faint sound which made her turn her head. Over her shoulder she saw that the saucer of milk had been set on the floor and the puppy, his legs sprawlingly braced at wide angles, was untidily lapping it up.

She stepped quickly down from the chair and out of the door, closing it behind her. In the corridor outside, "Well, *Sumner* . . . !" she said unsteadily.

In her general letter later that month she reported, "Our refugees seem to be getting along better now. Ziza is still very silent and so quiet you wouldn't guess it was Ziza, but she is up and dressed every day and has been out with her mother once for a walk. The new baby is a great plaything for us all, especially for Petella, who's devoted to her. It gives the family quite a rest from Petella's questions. Ziza's little boy, who was pretty well used up when he came, has taken a real turn for the better too. We have a puppy in the family now—Irish terrier by his looks—to keep little Adrien company while Petella and Brother are at school; school here goes on, you know, till Bastille Day, the fourteenth of July. The puppy and the little boy have great times together, and Adrien won't go to sleep at night now unless Toutou is tucked up with him. That silly name, I hasten to say, is little Adrien's own idea. Yesterday, with Toutou equipped with magnificent red-leather harness and leash, Adrien took his dog out for his first walk. Adrien's first, too. I went along, of course, but I didn't count. Adrien was showing the puppy the wonders of the great world. It was sweet to see the fatherly care the little boy gave his pet when we crossed the street to get into the Luxembourg, and when the foolish little thing, wriggling and bouncing all over the place, wrapped his leash around a tree and brought himself up short, with an injured goggle-eyed look of puppy surprise, little Adrien burst out laughing." (She did not say that the tears had gushed from her eyes at the sound.) "I think now that by the beginning of next school time, he will probably be well enough to go to school with Petella. They are about of an age, you know.

"I don't speak of the war to you because I imagine, being in a neutral country, you get more complete news and know more about it than I. Jean Iturbe, Dominiqua's son, was badly wounded in the last of the Verdun siege, at Thiaumont. But he is getting well fast and will probably be returned to the front before next winter."

12

Ziza made no comment on the change which gradually took place in little Adrien, although Matey thought she turned her head to listen when his voice rose above those of the other children playing or amicably wrangling in the children's room. She made no comment on the thriving condition of the baby, although she soon began to do her full share of caring for the little thing. She made, in fact, no comment on anything. Although by the end of summer she was nearly back to normal weight and seemed to have recovered her physical strength she might almost not have been there, for any impression of personality she gave. "I'll take those packages to the mail." "Let me finish that sock." "Tell me the address of the hospital and I'll look him up." She seemed to have no other language. Matey noticed that the various soldiers on leave who came and went in the apartment scarcely seemed to know that she was there. Henri, thin and racked with sciatic pain, had come and gone again without venturing to break through the impalpable wall which still divided her from life.

Mimi too came up several times from La Ferté for between-train visits, but to Matey's exasperated compassion the relations of the other Vinets with Mimi grew no easier. This in spite of an obvious and difficult attempt to keep off the subject of disagreement.

She still did not bring her boys to Paris. "It disturbs their school work," she explained. There was now, since Ziza's return, no reason for continuing the watch in the apartment, and Mimi affectionately invited her mother and sister—"you too and the children, Mété"—to spend August with her in the country. But Mme. Vinet found reasons connected with their war-relief occupations which would make this impossible.

"Well, send little Adrien down then," said his Tante Mimi, laying a kind hand on his brown bullet-head; "he and my boys would have great days together."

Mme. Vinet said in a quick, vehement tone, "No, no, he would better stay with us." Mimi's face darkened in the ensuing silence.

Matey was out of all patience with this misery, self-inflicted as it seemed to her. But she dared say nothing, it was so far from anything she could understand. It seemed to her as out of character for Mme. Vinet as if she had struck at her daughter.

Ziza sat looking at her hands passively, apparently hearing nothing.

Time went on and she seemed to hear no more. She still ran with nervous haste from one task to another and spoke only of whether there was time to get one more letter in the mail or how many petticoats were needed for layettes in an *œuvre* for Belgian refugees.

The autumn of 1916 came. The war seemed more firmly rooted at the core of life than ever. The children went back to school, Ziza's little Adrien skipping beside them now. Toutou was left to forlorn solitary naps in the children's room. The baby girl grew fast, had four teeth, an inexhaustible supply of smiles and naughtiness, and began to know her own name, Mélanie. "I suppose she ought to be named for her mother," said Ziza.

"What was her father's last name?" asked Mme. Vinet, venturing timidly an inquiry about those blank years, with a glance at Matey for support.

"Müller," said Ziza briefly, pronouncing it in the French manner. She stood up. "Mété, there isn't enough chocolate for that package for Dominiqua's son. I'll go out and get it now while the shops are still open." She took some money from the family purse on the mantelpiece, the purse into which Mme. Vinet put the money that came in from music lessons and which Aunt Connie kept from ever becoming empty, and went away silently.

Mme. Vinet drew a long sighing breath.

"Patience, patience," murmured Matey.

The winter came on, the dreadful winter, the coldest of the war, the coldest known in France for a generation, fantastically cold, so that blood froze instantly on wounds, so that as the grim days dragged on, Matey sometimes felt as though even the sun had given up, defeated, and they were all left on a freezing planet to die slowly of the cold—those who were not cutting each other's throats. Adrian, Henri, and the other men coming and going from the front told strange stories about the cold there. Jean Iturbe, always gay with a touch of grotesquerie, delighted the children with a tale, accompanied by picturesque action, of how a man in his regiment, tormented by head lice, had recklessly washed his hair, cold or no cold, and how it had frozen stiff, in rattling knobs and wisps, on the tips of which, whenever he went out, he was obliged to hang his fatigue cap or his helmet. His encounter with his commanding officer, who rebuked him for his unmilitary aspect, and his invitation to the captain to feel for himself what the trouble was, narrated with much pantomime by Jean, sent the children into spasms of laughter. The success of this story made it grow into a serial folk-tale so that when Jean reappeared every four months the greeting of the children was to cry out, even long after the warm weather had come, even after that soldier lay in his grave in a military cemetery, "What has happened *now* to the man with the frozen hair?"

Henri was sent into Normandy as a cog in the machinery for settling disputes between the country people and the English troops stationed there, in the matter of doors and farm utensils and window frames burned by the British. The Vinets were indignant over such lawlessness, but it did not surprise Matey, remembering Mrs. Deyo and her talk of the burning of the clapboards, fence rails, and hen roosts by the American Revolutionary troops wintering at Fonteynkill.

The impression during that winter of being on a dying planet losing its vital heat was always associated in Matey's memory with the mingled dread and hope she and Adrian felt in hearing from afar what sounded like the echo of a change in American public opinion about the war. They gathered this almost entirely from their letters, as they saw few Americans save those in the ambulance service, for the most part as out of touch with home as they. And although the air was full of rumors of a change in the attitude of the United States, Adrian warned Matey not to pay too much attention to them, because rumors that winter were going beyond anything imaginable in wildness—for three days every one Matey met was repeating the news that the United States had purchased Constantinople and would present it to the Allies as a gift. Adrian still doubted whether the United States as a whole was any more aware of Europe than when they left Rustdorf. But as far as Matey was concerned, she was once more sure about something in the great world because of a small event in her own life; she had authentic information from a private source of her own which left no doubt in her mind that the change in the United States had taken place. Francis was writing to her with hot enthusiasm for the cause of the Allies and great indignation against the Germans.

Aunt Connie stood by the little group on the rue de Fleurus all through the cold. By dint of paying five prices and following up every hint as to where fuel might be found Matey succeeded in keeping a fire in the cook-stove and even one in the salamander in the living-room. That upper-class stove, supposed by French tradition to be incapable of burning anything but the best of anthracite, came down from its pedestal along with other aristocracy and sulkily burned coke and low-grade soft-coal sweepings. Aunt Connie also provided the expensive woolen underwear that was so necessary for life, for the four children and four women of the family as well as for the innumerable soldiers that were on their list.

One day in February, when they had not half a pailful of coal between them and zero weather, Matey vanished, following a clew given her by the father-in-law of one of their soldiers—for the ramification of their circle now led high and low into all sorts of connections. She returned hours later, followed by a grimy man bearing a huge sack of coke. "Where did you get it?" they cried as she appeared in the door, the man and the sack behind her.

"Sh! the gas works—Issy-les-Moulineaux—it's not allowed—the side door—and a taxi from there here," she told them under her breath.

After the carrier had gone, "What did it cost you?" Mme. Vinet exclaimed.

"Never you mind!" said Matey, kissing her.

That day for the first time Ziza said something a little personal to Matey. They were walking together to the omnibus station where they were to take busses to different destinations. Ziza said uneasily, "Mété, I don't understand . . . about how you—I hadn't really thought before. . . . Is it *your* money we are all . . ."

"No, it's not mine," said Matey quickly. "It's some that belonged to an old relative of mine who wanted it used in this way."

"Oh," said Ziza. She asked no more questions, climbing into her bus without another word. But Matey thought she noticed from that day that Ziza was perhaps more at ease with her than with Mme. Vinet, as though the effort to speak had a little broken down the wall.

But the winter had gone before she spoke again.

Much was happening in the great world to take their minds from their personal lives. They forgot even the cold in the excitement over the painful, joyful, tragic, splendid news of the Russian revolution. The newspapers were full of foreboding talk of the blow it gave to the cause of the Allies. But on her hospital visits, from the beds full of shattered men Matey heard very different comments. One day when she came into the ward where one of their soldiers lay wounded, a wheel-chair patient was reading aloud from a little radical sheet which told of the redressing of old wrongs in Russia and spoke especially of the return of the soil into the hands of those who cultivated it. From the beds came approvingly, "*They've* got something out of the war anyhow!" "Sounds like our revolution." The peasant she had come to see, almost an illiterate, asked in a shocked voice, "Didn't the country people in Russia own their own *land!*"

Another result of the Russian Revolution was the appearance among other refugees of the first of the touching, exasperating, charming, conscienceless Russian aristocrats who later poured in crowds into France, penniless and helpless. These first heralds, like the later hordes, drove to distraction the thrifty French bourgeois women directing the *œuvres* for refugees. What could be done for unreasonable cherry-orchard paupers who could not resist the desire to spend on one day of champagne and caviar money painfully provided out of many self-denying economies and intended to keep them alive for months!

Before spring came they had all also lived through the period of frenzied waiting to see whether the United States would continue diplomatic relations with Germany in spite of ever-increasing friction.

The answer came on a Sunday, when Matey and the children were on their way to their daily outing in the Luxembourg. Little Adrien and Petella (very good friends now, and allies against Brother's younger-child tyranny) had come to a standstill half way to the park and were insisting that he take his turn at being horse and let one of them be driver. Brother was receiving this righteous ruling in the spirit of an aristocratic Russian refugee. Matey let them fight it out.

Over their heated discussion, carried on in a clipped crackling elliptical French which reminded Matey of her old sharp play-discussions with Ziza, she looked idly up the street. It was quite empty this cold gray Sunday morning. As she looked an old newswoman in a ragged shawl, an armful of newspapers under her arm, came running around the corner. In front of her she carried the bulletin printed in large letters which, to save nerves nearly severed with long tense anxiety, was the only form of "crying the news" allowed on the streets in those days.

RUPTURE OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN GERMANY AND U.S.A.

Matey held out a two-sou piece. The woman snatched at it as she ran by, leaving one of her single-sheet papers in Matey's hand, and pounded on down the street.

"Oh, *let* him be driver then!" said Adrien. His mother's fiery impatience was in his voice.

Petella said stubbornly, "No, it's not *fair!*" Her intonation was like her Fort grandfather's.

Brother invented a Brother-like solution. He cocked his head on one side and said in his bird-like voice, "I'd just as *soon* be the horse if you let me be a *white* horse, with spots."

"Why, of course!" said Petella. "You can be any kind of a horse you like!"

"Why didn't you say so, then?" said Brother, submitting with a smile to having the harness slipped over his head.

Devouring the news in the paper as she walked behind the children, Matey was asking herself, "Will this mean war—real war—for my country? Men and boys from Rustdorf, old tennis partners, neighbors, cousins, lying in those dreadful hospital beds, looking their last at the world with those dreadful death-shadowed eyes?"

She read the paper all through, folded it, put it under her arm, and tried to give her attention to the children. They were running races now.

She stood looking at them blankly, not seeing them, but in their places the people for whom the shortening of the war would mean deliverance—Mimi's older boys nearer with every day to military service, Henri and the men of his age, worn and old, with gray in their thinning hair, the thousands and thousands of people in the occupied regions, listening passionately for the footsteps of liberators. And the women, all the women—behind the playing children, row upon row, the shadowy millions of heartsick women everywhere, waiting—

She turned from the children and the phantoms back of them and asked of the frozen trees, "Do I even hope it will mean war for my own country?"

She never knew the answer to that question.

The end of March brought drying country roads and made possible a long-planned expedition with Ziza out into the Seine-et-Oise where they had heard of a school for chicken farmers. Matey wanted to investigate this as a possibility for one of their soldiers soon to be discharged from the hospital where he had left one arm and part of one leg. The doctors there had told Matey he needed light outdoor work.

She welcomed the chance for a momentary escape from brooding over what she wanted her country to do, and what, regardless of her wishes, it would finally do. When she and Ziza climbed into the third-class compartment of the train for Gambaix she had resolved at all costs to put them out of her mind. The sight of the open country came to her like a revelation. She had not been out of the city since the trip so many months before to Crouy with Mme. Letellier. She had forgotten there was such a thing as country sky, and this was a spring sky, of a tender bright blue, with small very white clouds in it, each one shedding its own pearly light. Sitting close to the open window, she stared out hungrily. The larks were rising from the new-plowed fields, a faint angelic echo of their song penetrating even the rattle of the train. The smell of the awakening earth came in through the window as if it were the fragrance of the untarnished country sunshine.

The train climbed painfully up a grade, through a cutting, its old-fashioned engine (all the good ones were on trains at the front) badly fed by poor-grade fuel, panting and shaking its sides. At the top it emerged from the cutting and disclosed a magnificent field stretching to the horizon, the earth lovingly plowed and harrowed and fitted till it lay like a mantle of brown velvet on the bones of rock. *"Oh! le beau champ!"* cried Matey, and turning, found Ziza's eyes on her with something of their old expression.

To Matey's astonishment, she said, "You look more like yourself today, Mété, than I've seen you. You can't imagine what a relief it is to me. You've looked fairly frightening."

"I!" said Matey, astounded, and with a wild, bone-breaking effort of the imagination, guessed that she perhaps had been seeming as strange to Ziza as Ziza to her. How long it took self-centered human denseness to learn that there are always two sides to any human relation! She moved over to Ziza impulsively and put her arm around her shoulder.

"Why, Ziza, dear, I was only trying not to be intrusive with you, to . . ."

"You're always too reasonable, Mété!" said Ziza. "Too stable and . . ."

Matey laughed ruefully. "Listen, Ziza, let me tell you the idiotic ups and downs I went through the day Adrian came back from the front for his first *permission!"* She had just reached the end of her account of that irrational day in which she had felt and acted like a naughty child and was describing her hopeless deadly certainty, while she was undressing that night, of being unloved and forgotten, when "We approach Houdon, *mesdames,"* said the conductor at the door.

They were to go by diligence from Houdon to Gambaix and found the battered muddy vehicle waiting behind the little station. It was full of silent country women with baskets, returning from market. They made room for the two city ladies, who, separated from each other by the length of the wagon, yet looked at each other with an intimacy which brought them closer together than they had been since Ziza's return.

When they stepped down, in front of the school of aviculture, Ziza went on as if they had not been interrupted. "Did you *really*, Mété? *Did* you lose your head and act unreasonably?"

"Never anybody more so," said Matey. "What in the world ever makes you think I'm calm and well balanced!"

Their ring at the door was answered, and their inspection of the school began.

When it was finished and arrangements made for the admission of LeGuily, their soldier, there were still a couple of hours to wait before the diligence returned to the train. They had brought a lunch of bread and cheese and apples and now borrowed a canteen of water from the school kitchen. Matey suggested half timidly, fearing that Ziza would at any moment slip back into her aloof impersonal manner, that they climb to the top of a small hill to eat and wait there for the hour of the diligence. Ziza nodded and the country woman who, in the absence of her husband at the front was directing the school, pointed out the beginning of the path and told them that in the clearing at the top they would find a bench.

Unused as they were to country walking, they had no breath for talk as they climbed up the path. Arrived at the top, they ate their lunch at once, soberly talking over the possibilities of the poultry business for an ex-farmer with one arm gone.

They were silent after this, looking out over the brown countryside. Early in the season as it was, the earth was no longer in its winter sleep. Plowing teams, greening willows, grazing sheep, and the shouts of distant cocks were calling it back to life. The sun shone ardently upon the motionless women. In a bush of *aubépine* near them, leafless, but studded thick with glistening swollen buds, a flock of tiny birds were carrying on some sort of secret chittering discussion, incessantly bursting up from the bush in a fluttering indignation of tiny wings, and at once sinking back into it with low protesting murmurs.

Yes, Matey could for an instant forget the war. She began dreamily, "Ziza, do you remember one Sunday expedition in the country when we all sat like this after lunch and talked about—"

Ziza did not make a sound, but before she had finished her sentence Matey became aware that it was not being heard. She turned her head. Ziza was looking off at the horizon, very pale, her face so drawn that she was scarcely recognizable. When she lifted her eyes to meet Matey's, they seemed to have sunk back into their sockets. Matey put out her hand and took Ziza's small thin fingers into hers. They were hard and tense like bird claws. She said in a murmur, "Ziza—darling . . ." Ziza drew a long breath, fought down a nervous tremor of all her body, and said in a high shaking voice, "Mété, I can't tell Maman . . . she wouldn't understand. She and Papa were so peaceable, so *raisonnable*. Or if they weren't, it's so long ago she's forgotten. And I can't tell Mimi. She has only one answer for everything now, her new one. Do you suppose *you* could—" Matey put an arm around the little trembling body and drew it close. Ziza fixed her eyes searchingly on Matey's and brought it all out at once. "Mété, *I* brought on the war. And it was *I* who killed my Adrien."

At the thought which came instantly into Matey's eyes, she protested passionately, "No, no, don't think that. Oh, Mété, if you turn out to be only literal-minded and American, I won't have *anybody!* Mété, don't just think I'm crazy, or I *will* be! Listen to me first! Do you think there isn't any way for things to be true except literally, materially?"

She began talking very fast, in so low a voice that Matey, straining her ears, caught only disconnected phrases. "Mété, you know how crazy I was about Adrien? You know how I . . . Well, he was getting tired of . . . he was getting enough of being loved by me. That spring before my second baby was born—a girl—a neighbor—very young—just a little girl. Not seventeen—daughter of a cousin—I was sick, clumsy, no good for—she grew up that spring, all at once. You know. You've seen girls. Dazzling. Intact. Adrien didn't know really, I think, what he . . . *She* didn't know at all. He seemed like an uncle to her. But—she was half woman—she felt it. She smiled at him in a special way, lifted her eyebrows. Mété, she had such beautiful eyebrows—

"Everything I did was wrong because it was I, not Marie-Jeanne. I acted like a . . . Marie-Jeanne wore red. I bought a red dress, but Adrien— I saw how he liked her being gay, so I laughed too, till he gave me the blighting look that asks why you are making a fool of yourself.

"If he had only shared with me—I could have— But he never thought of me—except as being in the way.

"He used to sit brooding . . . forget that it was time to go to his work. And he was furious if he was not reminded. Before I spoke, every time I prayed, 'Oh, let me find the right word, the right tone, so that he will not look at me with that—' But I never did, never! never! never! He used to answer me, every word hard as a stone, 'Yes. What is it you want?' like a knife-edge at my throat. But if Marie-Jeanne came running in, he was all bright softness at once, gentle, eager, kind.

"Mété, it was like being burned at the stake. And I couldn't even scream out, 'Jésu! Jésu!' like Jeanne d'Arc.

"I know, I know, if I had been gentle, submissive . . . Marie-Jeanne was sweet. A good girl. She would have been married safely in a few years. But I can't be submissive. I couldn't stand it.

"I thought over and over, *'If only they could be separated for a while'* . . . a respite.

"If Marie-Jeanne's family would go away to live! Or if she would die! I would have killed her in a minute if I could, and Adrien not know. Or if *we* could go away! But what could take a Conacq away from Louvain! Mété, how I loathe that town! Nothing could ever induce me to set foot in it again.

"In May before my baby was born I thought of a way—I thought, 'If there was a war, Adrien would be mobilized, for a while at least.' I only thought of war like longer maneuvers. Mété, you must understand that. I never *dreamed* of anything more than something like longer maneuvers.

"And from that moment I willed a war to come. Night and day, I was praying for war. Every time Marie-Jeanne walked past the house—that tripping girl's step—I sent up my soul to call for war. I felt it coming. I used to lie awake at night and feel it like a huge roller slowly moving toward us in the dark. I lay there tugging at it to make it move faster."

She drew away from Matey's arms and struggled up to her feet. She said something in a rapid whisper which Matey could not hear, and like a little hunted animal she darted off across the stony open field, doubling and turning silently as though she felt her pursuer close at her heels.

Matey made short work of reaching her and caught her firmly in long, strong arms. It was dreadful to feel how the thin body was shaking. Matey and the powers of evil were fighting hand to hand now.

She said, "Ziza, look at me." She trusted to the steadiness of her own eyes to hold the distraught ones which were lifted to them. "Ziza, no, I don't think you are crazy. I see a truth in what you say. But if it is true for you—it is for everybody. You were right, I have been literal-minded. I see I brought on the war, too, by my beastly satisfaction with my own share. Ziza, yes, we all brought it on together, that is the truth. *But that's done now.* We must make what amends we can, or be too base! Ziza, it would be cowardice not to stand by your own little boy. Ziza, you're no coward. . . ."

Ziza said, her eyes flickering to and fro in their sockets, "Marie-Jeanne was one of those killed, the day— I saw her—her beautiful eyebrows all—"

"No, no, *no!*" cried Matey on a mounting note of intensity. "No, you did not kill her any more than we all kill with our thoughts."

The flickering black eyes steadied themselves against the steadfast gray ones, then slowly closed. The tense little body in Matey's arms went limp. Ziza's head fell to one side.

Matey laid her down on the ground. She was not frightened to have her faint, rather relieved. It gave them both a respite. And she hoped that a moment's unconsciousness might stand like a barrier between her and this hour. There was still water in the canteen. She poured a little of it on Ziza's forehead and rubbed her hands. When she saw the shut eyes flutter open she said in a quiet voice, "Come, Ziza dear, we must not lose the train to Paris. The children—"

Ziza drew a long quivering sigh and sat up, lifting her hands to her wet disordered black hair. After she had pinned it into place she said, "Ought I to tell Maman?"

"There is nothing to tell her," Matey reminded her. She took this chance to set before Ziza the picture of reality as she wished her to see it. "There is nothing to tell anybody, or to have in your mind, except a passing episode—nothing more—that might have happened to any woman in your condition. If the war hadn't come you would have forgotten it by now. Do you suppose that Adrien, once he held his second son in his . . ."

Ziza sighed. "You talk like a child, Mété. Of course he would." She put on her hat.

Matey felt an almost droll collapse of her impression of masterfully leading Ziza where she would. But she noticed that Ziza's voice had infinitely more of its old personality.

Ziza went on now, "It would have been the same thing over and over, probably, if he had lived. I couldn't change. And neither could he."

Matey broke in roughly now, speaking with the incautious sure affection of an old playmate. "Who's talking like a child now? Why shouldn't you have changed? Everybody else does! Everybody else grows up." She suddenly understood something that had been said to her years ago, and went on, hearing the voice of Adrian's father, "Why shouldn't you have come to realize that your husband was a human being and that it is cruel to expect anybody to be any more than that! And anyhow that's gone. Listen to me now, Ziza. I've made an effort, hard for me, to see the truth of something that is not literally so. Now it's your turn to look at what *is* literally true and see what there is to do that nobody will do if you don't."

As if she had not heard a word, Ziza murmured, "You have such good clear honest eyes, Mété!" She stood up. "And though you often don't seem to understand at all—I don't know why it is, but when it is a question of what to do, you are often so right . . . ! You're right now. No, I didn't die, not quite. I wanted to, but Maman kept me alive. I tried not to feel her waiting for me. But she won. And now I must do my share of living."

She went closer to Matey, and reaching up to kiss her cheek, said, "Mété, you have the gift of healing. Not what you say. Just yourself."

"It's only the relief you feel in saying it out," said Matey humbly.

They clambered down the hill and found the directress of the school for aviculture in sabots, spading up a corner of the garden near the foot of the path. From the look she gave them, Matey guessed she had seen from the distance the pantomime of Ziza's flight across the field and her pursuit. Ziza went on into the kitchen to return the borrowed water canteen. The country woman, leaning on her spade, watched her out of sight, and then turning to Matey, tapped her forehead and lifted inquiring eyebrows.

Matey explained, "A refugee. From Louvain."

The country woman nodded her understanding. "Oh, I see. Yes," she said and went on with her spading.

13

SHE wrote home, "America's decision seems to make the world over here different. Henri knows a newspaper reporter who was at the Chambre des Députés when the announcement was made that the United States would stand by the allies and had declared war on Germany. He tells us that the oldest men there could not remember any such scene of pure emotion. Every one of all parties was crying, and M. Ribot, the Premier, very old, said brokenly that now he was ready to die, knowing that the human race would not go down to destruction. . . . Our own news is that Adrian has been made Chef de Section. He hasn't told me much about it in detail—evidently assuming that I know as much as he does about the ambulance service—but I make out that he no longer drives an ambulance but is head of one of the newly formed sections, responsible for the work and morals of some twenty young Americans, mostly fresh from the States. He grouches about the change, as all men at the front do about everything, says he is sorry to leave his old comrades and his old Ford, but I think he's very much interested in his bigger job and takes a fatherly interest in all his new boys. Ziza seems better. She is often absent and preoccupied, but she enters into life more. She has been able to bring herself to tell her mother and Henri a little more about that blank year-and-a-half in which they knew nothing of her. Not many details—long gaps, but they know for instance that she never saw her husband from the time he went off. His regiment was sent to Liège and disappeared practically to a man. We know now too that Ziza supported herself and her household by doing cleaning and cooking in one of the Louvain hospitals. Her little maid, Mélanie, came from a Chauny family and had to stay on with Ziza because she wasn't allowed to leave Louvain. Ziza speaks of that time briefly, dryly, with the greatest effort. Never when her little boy is near. Just a sort of telegraphic statement of what some of the facts were. The only thing she has *described* is the tocsin that called the Belgian soldiers out from their homes. All one long night the church bells clanged together, hour after hour, clang! clang! clang! while inside the homes the women were helping the men get ready to leave. Ziza says no Belgian will ever get that sound out of his ears. In clear weather we sometimes hear the bells of Saint Sulpice come over the roofs to us. It's painful to see Ziza wince and turn pale.

"We still have no idea how she came out alive, and we feel we must not tax her with questions. I have a notion from one phrase of hers that she and little Adrien saw the massacre. She has told us a little about how she made her escape from Belgium. It was with the help of a German frontier sentry, older brother to the boy who was lodged with them, to whom Ziza had been kind. She says—most of the refugees do—that the savages we hear about among the Germans are nearly all in the professional army caste, those who make their living in peacetime by being soldiers. The ordinary soldiers, the citizen army, are like any men. I find it touching that many of the French and Belgian refugees say that they were often *sorry* for the private soldiers in the German army. Ziza says the lad who was billeted with them, Mélanie's sweetheart, burst into humiliated tears one day when telling them of some military 'discipline' inflicted on him by his lieutenant. Of course there were brutes among the common soldiers too, since everybody is in the army there as here, but Ziza says there were no more of them compared to the rest than the toughs and thugs in the slums of any town, and on the whole they were kept in rather stricter order by army regulation than by police regulations in peacetime. Of course none of this applies to the first days of the war, the invasion. That was, I gather, just one unbelievable nightmare of madness and terror on both sides, for the German soldiers seem to have been in as much of a panic as any one over the idea of being fired at from the houses. On the whole after the first she apparently suffered no more, physically, personally, from the German occupation, than slow starvation and incessant rudeness and arrogance from lesser officials carrying out autocratic, often absurd orders with the usual brutality of underlings—mean, petty interference with personal liberty and human dignity—the way they say immigrants are sometimes treated on Ellis Island, or like the roughness often shown to poor and ignorant people everywhere by the police. But of course these French and Belgian women and old men were not at all poor or ignorant, but very proud and used to respect. They were practically maddened by such nagging tyranny, under a frightful strain as they were from anxiety and hate."

As fast as the mails could bring it she had an answer to this letter from Francis, rebuking her sternly for sentimental sympathy with the enemy. "We are at war with a race of beasts and barbarians who are proud of their beastliness," he told her, "and that's the thing to keep steadily before our minds. They must be exterminated if the world is ever to know peace and civilization again. How do you expect to keep fighting spirit up if people at the rear undermine the morale! It's the least noncombatants can do, to support the Allies morally. Your own country is rousing itself, let me tell you."

To prove this he inclosed a newspaper clipping telling of the scene in one of the movie-houses in a near-by city where the leader of the orchestra had been hissed out of the theater for playing music by a composer with a German-sounding name. Matey turned the clipping over and in some local news on the back read an item about the arrest of a peddler because it was thought the plaster he was selling had been poisoned by German chemists.

Henri, in Paris on leave, came in to announce that a friend had sent him some tickets for the annual concert of the Bach Society. "The 'Passion according to St. Matthew' this year," he said; "my favorite." Seeing her with letters in her hands, he asked. "Good news from home?" "Well—yes," said Matey.

The series of *permissionaire* guests was now occasionally varied by one of Adrian's section on leave. It did Matey's homesick heart good to have them arrive with their Anglo-Saxon tongue-tied shyness, their frank boy's eyes, and their sprawlingly kind American manners—each bearing a torn scrap from Adrian's notebook —"Matey, if you can, take in Jack Rawling (or Steve O'Donnell, or Red Elliott). He doesn't know a soul in France."

One of them proved to hail from Dutchess County, inland from Poughkeepsie. With him Matey had long hours of reminiscence. "Yes, sure, I've been in Rustdorf. My folks went over there when I was a kid almost every fourth of July to see the celebration in the evening."

At this Petella lifted her golden head from her book with an astonished expression. "Oh, *I* remember *those!* Way back when I was a baby. The rockets going sh-sh-sh!" She traced an upward curve with her hand.

The boy from Dutchess County made a wry face. "I've sort of lost my taste for fireworks since being on the front so much," he said soberly. Matey made haste to change the subject. "Did you ever drive over from Millbrook to Amenia?" she asked. He brightened. "Sure thing! That view you get just before you start downhill into Amenia looks awful pretty in the fall, don't it?" His words hung before them the rich Inness-like gold and plenty of their home country, the opulence of its russet earth-colors, blue distances, and orange-colored sunsets hiding the pale, transparent brightness of the Paris spring.

"Say, Mrs. Fort," said the American boy, "it sounds foolish to care—but if—well, I'd sort of hate to think I *never* was going back there any more. If I should get mine, do you suppose you and Lieutenant Fort could see that I got sent back home to be buried?"

"Sure thing," said Matey, "if you'll do the same for us."

They shook hands on it.

He went back to the front, and his place was taken by a Basque comrade of Dominiqua's Jean. Endless incomprehensible conversations floating out from the kitchen filled the apartment with their mysterious language.

And finally, although it always seemed as if his turn would never come, came Adrian. The double row of braid sewed on his sleeve to mark him Chef de Section (or as he put it, honorary nothing in particular) brought him no salary, not even a minute French one like Henri's. The Forts allowed themselves few treats that cost money during his leave. Mostly, taking along a picnic lunch, they spent days in the country or in the gardens of Versailles, long, beautiful, tragic, gay days memorable with their double burden of joy and fear.

The Fourth of July approached and brought the announcement that the new allies would parade in Paris on their Fête Nationale. The crowd promised to be enormous; windows along the rue de Rivoli commanded fancy prices. Military shows were rare in Paris, especially since the unacknowledged but everywhere talked-about mutiny after the failure of the great spring offensive. Troop movements had been routed around the city, not through it, for fear of anti-war demonstrations.

"I hate to disappoint the kids," said Adrian, talking it over with Matey, "but they wouldn't be able to see a thing in the jam that's certain to turn out. I have to take an early train on the fifth, too. I'd sort of like to spend the last day in Versailles together. Do you suppose they'd be satisfied if we compromised and took them to see the troops come in and march to their barracks? The paper says they're to arrive early on the morning of the third. Hardly anybody'll be there. We can have a good look."

He was wrong. When they reached the freight station where the parade detachment were to leave the train they found the sidewalks along the line of march already packed by a crowd, curious and watchful rather than effervescent. Adrian's khaki uniform passed for that of a French Colonial or English soldier, the children spoke the purest Paris slang, so that their presence imposed no check on the talk of the people about them. Everywhere they heard the sort of questions which in politer form their own circle had put to them, the answers to which they knew as little as any one. "Had the Americans really any soldiers at all?" "Would they send them if they had?" "Weren't the Americans in the war as the Japanese had been . . . with a few warships in the Mediterranean?" "They were all 'beesness-men,' weren't they, who as such would expect their money to do their fighting for them?" Adrian hoisted Brother to his shoulder, and Matey paid a franc for a packing-box as a grand-stand for Petella. Nothing was to be seen except a long high wall, broken by great iron gates, now tightly closed. They settled themselves to wait. After a pause filled with ponderings Matey said to Adrian, "I wonder if perhaps they are right. How can we get any real soldiers to send? *Is* there an American army? I never saw any trace of it."

Brother had forgotten all his English by this time and detested conversations he could not understand. He wriggled now and demanded to know what Maman was saying. "Never mind," she told him and said no more, joining her silence to that of the expectant crowd.

They were in a poor quarter of Paris and the people about them were mostly in the clean worn self-respecting clothes of French working-men and women. They had evidently just stepped out from shop and lathe and bench and laundry to see the new show. They stood passively—overworked, quiet folk, curious, tired, doubtful. A good many men in faded uniforms like Adrian's held, as he did, a child perched on a shoulder.

From the distance a train whistled shrilly and came roaring in behind the wall. People stopped their desultory talking and pressed to the curb. Petella began to jump up and down on her packing-box.

The invisible train stopped, a scream of brakes pouring over the top of the wall. There was a sound of doors flung open and many irregular footsteps. A silence, through which, sharply running down the scale from near to far, came a crackling of barked-out short words in harsh voices. The words were meaningless to the crowd, but its ears, trained by three years of war, recognized the tone as unmistakably that of professional military commands. A band struck up, the iron gates opened, and out they came, with a long supple swinging stride, quite different from the close-knit quick-step of the French . . . row upon row of men utterly different from the nation in uniform which that crowd knew as an army.

Here were no sober fathers of families with serious eyes, no pink-cheeked lads with sensitive scholar's faces, no mild, weedy clerks from small-town shops, no stalwart, burly, vacant-faced farm hands, no spectacled desk workers. Here were lean, lanky, stony-faced men, all of an age apparently, and certainly all of one predatory breed, with bulging jaw muscles, hard, reckless eyes, and leathery skins burned to a uniform sallow brown by the sun of the Mexican border. Their inharmoniously assembled features were not all of one pattern; some were beak-nosed and some had broad bulldog faces. But all were compact of bone and gristle and grim insensitiveness; dangerous customers every one, by their looks, of an ugly, powerful, dauntless, low-grade humanity, as unfamiliar to Matey as to the French people around her.

"Mother!" whispered Petella in the intense silence which greeted their appearance. She pulled at her mother's sleeve. "Mother, are those *Americans?* They don't look like Father's ambulance boys a bit!"

The crowd of spectators stared, fascinated, without a murmur. The head of the column had advanced by this time to the middle of the street, where in response to a curt and unintelligible command, they swung to the right by fours, executing the maneuver with the inimitable careless ease of professional skill. And now they were marching by the crowd on the sidewalk—*left!* right! *left!* right!—swinging their long legs from loose hips, their hard small eyes impassive and expressionless in the leathery faces with the high cheek-bones. Not a sound had yet come from the astonished crowd. The slap! slap! of their heavy shoes sounded loud on the pavement. Then an old woman in front of Petella lifted up a loud exultant cry, "God! how *ugly* they are!" she shouted enthusiastically and began to clap her hands. It was the voice of the crowd. A roar of applause and cheering broke out like thunder, rolling its way down the street abreast of the marching men. The hard-faced soldiers continued to march, without a quiver of their eyes. The noise of the shouting seemed to rebound from their callous unresponsiveness like the echo of a yell from a cliff. It was the manner which suited their looks. The applause became a madness. People shouted, *"Vive l'Amérique!"* and *"Hourra!"* throwing up their hats, waving aprons and handkerchiefs. The long brown line of khaki-clad men continued to file out from the iron gates—*left!* right! *left!* right!—and to swing at the exact middle of the road with the same flexible perfection.

Petella and Brother caught the madness, shouting shrilly, *"Vive l'Amérique! Vive l'Amérique!"* till their voices gave out, and after that screeching inarticulately with the others. An American flag went by, bright, new, silken, gold-fringed. Adrian stiffened to a salute, and wild sudden tears of pride and love and homesickness came to Matey's eyes. Some young working-girls near the Forts had turned and struggled through the crowd to a flower-stand and now were fighting their way back to the curb with posies in their hands. At first they only waved these and threw a few at random, but soon, frantic with noise and excitement, they ran out close to the marching men, calling to them, pelting them with flowers. Their clean black cotton working-dresses fluttered, their tenement-dweller's young pale faces flushed to pink.

The first change of expression came into the faces of the marching soldiers. For a moment they looked almost boyish, almost naïve in surprise. Then as their eyes rested on the girls, the corners of their mouths began to twist into knowing grins that were neither boyish nor naïve.

Another bright American flag went by. The tears did not come to Matey's eyes. Bang! bang! bang! went the drums, inaudible above the shrieks of the crowd, perceptible only as a rapid throbbing pulse. "Let's go back, Adrian," said Matey; "I've seen enough."

"The old Adam's never far from the surface, is he?" said

Adrian as they walked away. "How does that poem go—do you know it, the one that begins

" 'War
I abhor
And yet how sweet
The sound along the marching street
Of drum and fife'?

Well, that's me."

"Is that the one," asked Matey, "that has the couplet,

" 'For yonder yonder goes the fife
And what care I for human life'?"

"You said it!" answered Adrian.

At the lunch table Mme. Vinet inquired, "I hear the American soldiers were given a fine welcome. How did they look to you? Was it like a glimpse of home to see them?"

"Not in the least," said Adrian. "Not the very least in the world." At her look of inquiry he went on, "For all I know they may be exemplary citizens, but if you want to know how they *looked* to me, I can only say that every face I saw looked as if it belonged to a man who'd kick in your ribs after he'd knocked you down, and who'd be ashamed of his softness if he ever felt tempted to keep his word to a woman—and, to give 'em their due, who'd stick to a wounded buddy through hell and high water. Did they make me think of home? They did not. Wallenstein might have commanded that outfit, or Sir Henry Morgan or Du Guesclin."

Matey described their aspect in a little more detail. Adrian explained their status as professional fighters and why there were so few of them available.

Mme. Vinet nodded her head, looking sick. "I know. I know what kind of men you mean. Like our Foreign Legion." She allowed herself a burst of thin-skinned feminine disgust. "I can't bear such men! I can't bear to think they are to be used to take the place of such men as those who have died in the war."

Matey had come home both excited and depressed by the morning, above all freshly awakened to a bewildering world filled with all sorts of men and women whose standards were alien to hers—oh, different beyond imagination, and yet firmly, vitally held, and a part of the whole of which she was a part. She felt as puzzled as when she had first seen that perhaps Francis's very insensitiveness had made him a kinder, more helpful friend to their father and mother than she and Priscilla. She answered Mme. Vinet lamely, "Oh, I don't know."

"What don't you know?" asked Ziza, who had been paying no attention to the conversation.

"I don't believe I know much of anything at all," said Matey.

"I know one thing," said Adrian, "no collection cf worthy citizens could have given that war-tired crowd such a swig of the raw whiskey of hope as was poured out by that bunch of roughnecks."

Mme. Vinet was a little shocked at the Forts' attitude. "If that's the truth," she said with a grimace of distaste, "it's a horrible truth!"

"Oh, I don't know," murmured Matey again, sure of nothing except that things were vastly more complex than Mme. Vinet seemed to see.

14

FROM that time on, many more burning drinks of raw American whiskey were tossed down parched French throats. The "American phase" of the war advanced to the center of the stage. Both because it was all good news of the most inspiriting kind and because the *mot d'ordre* to the press was to play up American war activities for the sake of the effect on German spies, there seemed to be little in any magazine or newspaper save items about the stupendous American effort. The staggering figures of American Red Cross financial resources, the prodigious sums expended on warehouses for the vast American supplies, the speed with which the American engineering corps rushed up barracks and hospitals and built railroads and installed telephones—French talk, all in admiring superlatives, turned on nothing else. The now forgotten rumor of the purchase of Constantinople was less fantastic than some of those visible realities.

It was all as dazzling to Matey as to any one else, and she was distressfully unable to answer the innumerable questions put to her by her French connections about "American methods."

Nothing in the academic life of her youth nor in the life of Rustdorf had prepared her for such an America. She was staggered—proud, happy, excited. A little uneasy too, she did not know why.

American soldiers of the newly forming citizen armies were of course (all war-experienced French people understood this) slow in arriving on the field of combat. Everybody knew it took time to give them the training and preparation necessary to fit them for their new occupation. But almost at once Paris was filled with civilian war workers in the handsome uniforms of big charitable organizations who, apparently, needed no training or preparation. Their appearance did a great deal of good. French people, long reduced to the ultimate lowest margin of everything, took a starved childish pleasure in hearing the fairy-story accounts of American war relief work. Aladdin built his dream palace no more rapidly than, in the French legend, American war relief organizations leased huge buildings and filled them from top to bottom, in the twinkling of an eye, with typewriters, steam radiators, roll-top desks, telephones, and self-possessed ladies in khaki uniforms, ready to bind up the wounds of war on a large scale. French women, who for three years had been doggedly and economically binding them up on the smallest possible scale, lost their sense of reality. The refugees, wounded soldiers, war widows, war orphans, and war *œuvres* in the Vinet circle naturally looked to Matey, the only American they knew, to canalize toward them their share of this river of golden beneficence. Matey was not very adroit about it. She began going timidly to the offices of the new American organizations and to the older ones, now immensely enlarged in this new shower of gold. Mingling with these prosperous strangers, she felt very shabby and refugee-like in her plain worn clothes. She thought she knew how she probably looked to these vital, athletic, expensively shod war workers—as war victims had often looked to her, too unpromising and discouraged and hopeless to be worth helping.

If she did, they did not show it, receiving her in no recognizable European manner, but in one or another of the several American ways of making contacts, some of them easy, comradely, some of them woundingly brusque and business-like; breezy and familiar in one organization, in another bound about stiffly to the eyes with red tape and card catalogues. Not one of them, however, gave the appraising European caste-glance at the quality of her gloves and shoes. They must (Matey supposed) have other standards of judging—their own—but she never learned what they were nor when she was conforming to them. She never found her way with any certainty about the labyrinth of suites of outer and inner offices nor even knew at all beforehand what response would be evoked by any particular one of her requests for help. She knew it couldn't be a mere matter of mood that they granted a hundred dozen costly woolen blankets one day and refused to donate a bottle of milk the next. She guessed that this impression, not at all in keeping with their unfailing good will as individuals, came from the immense impersonal vastness of their organizations. Accustomed to depending on static, personal small French war charities, she was perpetually amazed to the point of stupefaction by the shifts and changes in these large ones. When, in order to go on with some arrangement started, she had threaded her way to an office where she was beginning to be a little familiar with the faces, it was always breath-taking to her to find there an entirely new personnel and to be told that the people with whom she had been dealing had been transferred from the child welfare department to the war hospital department and that the new incumbents in this office were starting to "reorganize the work along new lines." Matey sometimes wondered whether the intense desire of these noncombatant Americans, middle-aged men and women, to "get to the front" had anything to do with this instability. Why in the world, she asked herself, did they all so wildly yearn to get to the front? None of the French noncombatants with whom she had been living all this time had ever thought of it.

The new people in any war relief organization usually looked a good deal like the old ones: a clean-shaven middle-aged professional man in the inner office, his civilian chin and middle bulged into odd shapes by his uniform; in the outer office one or many energetic youngish women in uniform with much better figures than his. Most of them with the quality of eye of a bank cashier looking at a man trying to pass a bogus check. "I don't blame them a bit for this," she wrote Adrian, describing an uncomfortable experience trying to get some supplies for a group of refugees under her charge. "Everybody with money to spend gets that eye, I suppose. Has to. It's natural enough in business. But it makes you think there must be something inherently wrong about charity if the minute it gets big it gets this way." Adrian wrote back, "The minute anything human gets big, it gets wrong. I didn't invent this, William James did. He was dead right."

But although the new office workers always looked like the ones whose places they took, of course they did not know Matey, and asked her to state her appeal all over again and to spell out once more those queer French proper and place names. Matey wrote to Adrian, "You feel like a rat in a perfectly new kind of maze, with the bells ringing at all the times when they never rang before. And everybody reacts to every stimulus in just the Alice-in-Wonderland way you would be sure they wouldn't! There must be of course some general lines of policy that are being followed; they have such splendid people in the managing offices. But from the ones you actually do business with it seems impossible to make out even the outlines of any plans that stay put. You come to feel that there's no use trying to act consecutively or to count on anything's being carried out as it was planned. I'm reduced to thinking that the best you can do is to grab at the times when the grabbing seems to be good. And often the grabbing is simply epic. You know that *vestiaire* in the rue Pascal, where Mme. Vinet and Ziza and I have worked so much—oh, yes, I remember now, you went with me there on your *permission* in April to help carry some bundles of clothing. Well, you should have seen me driving up to the door in glory yesterday afternoon on the front seat of an American truck, sitting beside one of those nice, nice Americans—you know—the exquisitely candid kind, who look pityingly at every French person as a war martyr. Well, he was part of a red-letter experience for me. Only a day or so ago I had put in an appeal at the Red Cross building for some more supplies of what we mostly give out from the rue Pascal place, clothing, shoes, medicine, and nursing supplies. No French organization would have got around even to considering it so quickly. But yesterday when I went to the same office I was told that my supplies had been taken out of the warehouse and loaded and the driver was waiting for detailed directions about how to reach the *œuvre*. I said, 'Why can't I just go along and show him?'

"I gasped when I saw the size of the truck, but of course you never understand exactly all that may be going on, and I supposed it was going on several other such errands, and only a part of its contents were for us. When we got to the rue Pascal I found Mme. Vinet and Ziza had come in to help mend some old clothing that had been sent us. When I opened the door and went in they sat there sewing away with two other of our regular helpers, the woman who keeps the stationery store across the street and that nice old refugee from Brussels, the Marquise something-or-other, who pays for the food and lodging she gets from the *œuvre* by sewing for it. I didn't know how to find words for what I had to announce. I felt as though I ought to float in, singing it at the top of my voice like a prima donna. What I did was to say, as though I were a born Quaker instead of just having married one, 'Can you come and help me, please, carry in some supplies the American Red Cross has sent us?'

"They came. You should have seen their wild look up at that vast truck. And when we began to unload it, it was *all* for us! Yes, that entire moving-van of a thing was full of shoes and malted milk and flannel petticoats and quinine and baby shirts and aspirin and wool socks, underwear, caps, bandages, disinfectants—everything I had set down on my list was there, by the dozens, by the hundreds! It was one wild orgy. We unpacked and carried in, the nice boy from New Mexico working like ten, till we were fairly walking on air. I'll never forget it.

"The French women kept their dignity as long as the representative from America was there, insisted on making him drink some coffee and eat some little dry cakes (he must have hated them, but he swallowed them down like a hero), and before he climbed up on his seat in the truck they each shook hands with him and made him a little speech of thanks, nicely worded and heart-felt, and of course just that much Choctaw to him.

"But when we were by ourselves with the doors shut we ran around like crazy things from one to another of those magnificent piles, exclaiming and handling them. Mme. Vinet stood, the tears running down her cheeks, in front of the heap of malted milk cartons, and the old Belgian Marquise kept saying, 'Oh, the beautiful woolen drawers! Oh, the lovely woolen shirts!' I was so disappointed when I went back this morning to thank Major Woodhull (by the way, he's a doctor from Hamilton who used to be a student of Father's at the University) to find that he had been 'sent to the front on a mission.'"

Ziza had become specially interested in a group of undernourished refugee children and had made one try at finding her way to the right American war relief organization to ask for help. She had emerged from this so daunted by the magnitude and the

English-speakingness of everything, so shamed by the penetrating personal questions asked her, so nettled at seeming to be put in the position of a beggar, and so sure that she had filled out the wrong blanks and given the wrong answers, that she asked Matey to go on with the undertaking. Matey did not at first have much more success, because the group of children in question did not (for various reasons of technical classification lore) come exactly under any of the subdivisions into which the field had been systematically divided by American card-catalogues. No sooner had she finished explaining their status and her own than she was found to be in entirely the wrong place and was passed from one office to another ("as if," she wrote Adrian, "exactly as if I were the buck in person").

Coming in from the unprofessional outside world as she did, she never grasped the intricacies of filing systems, nor which kind of information blanks should be filled in for which undertakings. She made a good many mistakes, but she kept persistently filling out application blanks and explaining her own status until she arrived one day in a new office where a friendly American girl in uniform took out a new application blank and began to ask new questions.

"It's just a matter of form," she explained comfortably to Matey, "not that any one cares a whoop what year you were married. It's only that they've got a new set of blanks they're trying out and I'd get skinned alive if I didn't write on every dotted line."

How good it sounded, thought Matey, in the intervals when this nice girl was writing down the answers to her questions, to hear this open American intonation, unaware to its last un-European syllable of the existence of reticence and caution.

"Cute hand-bag you've got," remarked the girl. "Made by the war blind in the Phare? Yes? Isn't it pretty! I'm going to get one to send home to Momma. What did you say your husband's middle name is? Mercy! How *do* you spell it?"

When Matey was asked the name of her American residence, she said, "I'd better spell that, too. It's such a little place, nobody ever heard of it. R-U-S-T-D-O-R-F."

The girl laid down her fountain-pen with the gesture of one stopping work to give vent to emotion. "Well, for goodness' sakes, are you from Rustdorf! Is that the way you pronounce it, by the way? We none of us knew how *to* pronounce it!"

"No," said Matey, "not like 'rust' on iron, like 'roost' in 'rooster,' you know. It is an old Dutch name that means 'village of rest.' "

"Oh, I know what it means, all right," said the girl even more unexpectedly. She looked at Matey in mounting astonishment. "So you come from Rustdorf. Well, can you beat that!" She hastened to explain, "Funniest thing you ever heard of. Just before I left home (I live in Mason City, Iowa) an old-maid aunt of mine—great-aunt she was really—died, up in Alberta, Canada. She'd lived up there with one of Momma's brothers for years and *years*—oh, she was *awfully* old, must have been past seventy. Well, when she died, didn't they find in her will that she wanted to be buried in the Quaker cemetery of Rustdorf, Dutchess County, New York. No reason given, nothing more than that Rustdorf meant 'resting-place.' You can just see our whole family, can't you, trying to figure out why in the world an old lady who was one of the first settlers in Calgary wanted to be buried near the Hudson River? She hadn't lived there ever that anybody knew about; our folks came from Ohio, though she had gone to a ladies' school somewhere back east when she was a girl. The only thing anybody could think of was a story one of Momma's old cousins used to tell about this aunt's having been crossed in love, that she'd been engaged when she was still living back east, and another girl had taken her young man away from her. But that cousin was dead too by this time and nobody could remember exactly what she *had* told. Anyhow the old great-aunt hadn't ever married. But maybe she just wasn't the marrying kind. She certainly was not, the only time *I* ever saw her." She gazed at Matey again. "Well, to think that when you go home you'll live right near the cemetery where my Aunt Priscilla is buried."

Distinctly as though Aunt Tryntje stood there beside her, Matey heard her voice saying, "Oh, they did name her *Priscilla*, didn't they?"

Through this voice she heard the girl before her going on. "Why, maybe you know something about that end of it? Though it would be a pretty old story, I guess, by this time."

"I have only lived in Rustdorf since my marriage," said Matey.

"Well, let's get along," said the friendly girl, looking down at her desk again. "What American war relief outfit do you belong to, anyhow? American Fund for French Wounded? I hear they've changed the name of that, but you know which one I mean."

"I don't belong to any," said Matey. "I'm just living here, you know, with my family."

"Oh, you've *got* to belong to something!" said the girl from Iowa, laughing. "You've *got* to! There's a blank on this card that's got to be filled up!"

15

It was through the help, Matey always felt sure, of the friendly girl from Iowa that she and Ziza were able—not, as they had hoped, to get cod-liver oil and better food for their eighteen undernourished, rickety, war-worn refugee children—but to send them south for the winter. "As if they were millionaires!" cried Ziza incredulously. "Mété, are you *sure* there's no mistake!" They had all by this time learned to scrutinize every possibility of misunderstanding with American philanthropic organizations.

"There doesn't seem to be!" said Matey, as excited as Ziza. "Let me read their letter over again."

She read it through once more, very slowly. "No, there's no mistake. It's plain in black and white. Arrangements have been made to admit them to a convalescent home right on the seashore—they'll be out of doors in the sunshine all winter long! One of the nurses in that office told me they had wonderful cures of rickets there . . . undernourished children of six, like the little boys in that family from Lille, who have never stood on their feet, running around playing tag, inside five or six months."

Ziza said, awestruck, "It'll save every one of them. It seems incredible! Why, Mété, what a wonderful nation yours is!"

Matey still felt very uneasy when French people burst into superlatives about Americans. Perhaps, she thought, it was the Quaker atmosphere of "plainness" striking in which made her ill at ease with any superlatives. She wondered now what Ziza would say to the passion the American women war workers had for "getting to the front"; for that matter, to the liberal use of rouge and lipstick on the pleasant face of the nice girl from Iowa. "Don't go idealizing us," she said, knowing that she sounded to Ziza as Adrian's father did to her.

"It's impossible to!" said Ziza with a flare of her old ardor.

Matey had an opportunity to see what Ziza would think of the girl from Iowa, for on the evening of the children's departure for the south she appeared in the railway station, trim, smiling, painted, kind, a large khaki bag marked "U.S.A." slung over her shoulder. "I just thought I'd like to see 'em off," she said in her cheerful loud voice to Matey. "I've stacked up so many cards in the filing-box about this gang of kids, I wanted to see what they look like." She turned her head and saw the lamentable little creatures climbing feebly up or being carried into the railway carriage. Her bright face sobered into a beautiful pity. "*Well*—they don't look like much, do they?" she said. Matey perceived that she was capable, when she chose, of speaking in a low voice. She moved toward them. "Oh, say, Nurse!" she called to the Red Cross official in charge of the convoy. "I've brought along some little tricks and things for them to play with to keep 'em from being homesick on the train. *No candy!* Is it all right to pass 'em around now?"

"Sure," said the nurse over the shoulder of the white-faced child she was carrying. "Could you find a better time! I can see by the looks of them they're getting ready to holler their heads off. And if you knew how little baby-talk French I've got on tap!"

The girl from Iowa clambered nimbly up the steps. Matey stood on the platform in charge of the group of anxious mothers who tearfully demanded fresh assurances from her that their little crippled children would be returned safely to them in the spring. Through the windows of the railway carriage she saw Ziza, pale and thin in her widow's dress, put a child down on the seat and turn to greet the smartly tailored newcomer. They stood together for a moment talking (in what language?—Matey wondered) and then passed among the children, putting into each outstretched skinny hand a bright toy from out the bag of the girl from Iowa. A joyful babble of children's voices followed the progress of the two women. Matey noticed how eagerly they looked up into the face of the American girl, turning like little sunflowers following the sun from Ziza's pale quietness to that brilliantly lipsticked smile. The agitated women clustering about Matey took their handkerchiefs down from their eyes to watch. After the first dazzling surprise the children remembered their mothers, standing on the platform outside, and turned their thin radiant faces toward the windows, crying out, *"Maman! Maman! Re* *garde! Regarde!*" and holding up comic Negro dolls, checkerboards, celluloid babies, wooden ducks. *"En voiture!"* called the employee running along beside the train. Ziza and the American girl hurried down the steps to the platform. The train began to move. The mothers clenched back the tears under their eyelids to see the last of the happy child faces; the train moved more rapidly and was gone.

"That's the best time I ever gave myself in all my young life!" said the girl from Iowa emphatically. "I was going to spend that money on a permanent wave—think of it! And a shingle-cut just as good-looking!"

Ziza came up to her and said very earnestly, "I wish that you would tell your family that there are in France women and children who love America because of your kindness." The girl from Iowa did not understand a word of this, but its meaning was apparent. "Oh, *that's* all right," she said, heartily shaking Ziza's hand.

Ziza went off to escort one of the more ignorant mothers to the right Métro train, making a rendezvous with Matey to meet her in the waiting-room.

"I've got to get a move on," said the girl from Iowa, "or I'll miss a swell time. Another girl and I have got to know two dandy fellows—in the Marines, both of them lieutenants. We've got a date with them at Maxim's tonight . . . 'girls from Maxim's'! This is the life!"

She pulled a little enameled case from the pocket of her uniform and began to apply more lipstick to her mouth. "I never used make-up like this at home," she explained laughingly to Matey. "The older girls and the alums. in my sorority would have slain me if I had. But in Paris you've got to do like the Parisians do!"

She snapped her little case shut and asked, "Oh, say, Mrs. Fort, where is Maxim's anyhow? I don't mind telling *you* that I wouldn't know the place if I met it! Off the comic-opera stage."

Matey reflected, gathering together half-memories of old walks in Paris streets, "That's the one, isn't it, that's on the rue Royale, left hand as you go up from the place de la Concorde?"

The girl from Iowa laughed out admiringly, "I guess you're more of a live wire than you look, Mrs. Fort," she said. "The rue Royale, left-hand side. Well, *good*-by!"

She ran up half a dozen steps lightly, turned and skimmed down them again, bounding up to Matey, her face aglow, "Honestly!" she said. "Just between us Paris has got Mason City and Rustdorf beat a mile, *n'est-ce-pas* what?"

Matey found Ziza waiting for her, still admiring the American nation. "It goes beyond anything I could imagine, Mété," she said. "You don't seem to appreciate it! A girl like that, a *jeune fille*, leaving her *parents*, and her *home*, and coming to a distracted foreign land to devote herself to suffering! Do you suppose for a moment a French girl would do what she is doing?"

"Certainly not!" said Matey with conviction.

"Well, then—" said Ziza, observing with dissatisfaction Matey's enigmatic expression. "What *is* in your mind? Her rouge and lipstick? Mété, how narrow of you!"

"Well, perhaps it is narrowness," admitted Matey.

They walked together to the exit. Ziza said, pulling out her notebook to look at an address, "Why not go to Mme. Allier's to see about that sewing material now? Her place is on the rue Pasquier. It's only a step if we go up the rue Royale."

"Not the rue Royale!" cried the startled Matey in a panic. Before Ziza could speak she added, "We're in no hurry. Don't you think it would be nicer to take the longer way around?"

16

SPLENDID reports came back from the children in the Hendaye Convalescent Home.

Splendid reports came from America. Every letter, every newspaper, was full of the spectacle of a mighty nation, united to the last citizen, rousing itself for a crusade. Priscilla's letters told of the change in American cooking, the use of cornmeal for wheat, all Rustdorf subscribing to Liberty Loans. Francis's letters were on fire with patriotism. He was at the head of one Drive after another.

The nurse in charge at Hendaye wrote to Matey that those children from Lille with the terrible rickets were getting bones in their legs so fast that you could almost see them grow.

Adrian's father wrote that the entrance of the United States into the war had upset Aunt Tryntje's eighty-year-old mind.

"She now thinks apparently that I am my father and Adrian is I, gone to the Civil War. One war to each generation of our family!"

A thick envelope came from Hendaye containing a grateful note from every child in the home, addressed to "Our American benefactors."

Some American troops began to appear, new citizen soldiers these, who looked to Matey's homesick eyes like her own kin. At first she sometimes stopped an especially boyish one on the street to shake his hand, ask where his home in the States was, and to give him her address if he needed letters written or interpreting done. Not one of them looked suspiciously at her or answered with caution. She could have wept with pride and alarm at their candor.

But it became evident that candor or no candor, few of them came to Paris to waste time over mothers of families. A few did follow up her invitation and came in for a call. Once. But they showed none of the starved hunger for home life which made the French *poilus* play eagerly with the children, cling so to the illusion that this home was a little their own. When at the front, the Americans were said to be kind to the children in the army zone and helpful to the old, but once arrived in Paris, it was by no means home life they sought out. These big boyish-faced good-natured young men were brothers to the girl from Iowa and shared heartily her opinion of the relative advantages of their home towns and of Paris, agreeing warmly with her dictum that this was the life.

Adrian was formally enrolled with the American Army now, very much surprised, he wrote his wife, "to find a Rustdorf Fort with the rank of Lieutenant in the U.S.A. army." But this was only to regularize on paper his situation. In reality he continued doing exactly the same work with the same French Division, still seeing few Americans and getting most of his news from Matey's letters. The change had one result, however, very important to the Forts. Adrian now had a salary which, moderate though it seemed to Americans, seemed very large compared to the French military pay. The spending of what was left of Aunt Connie's money could be appreciably slowed down, which, when Matey considered how little they knew what might be before them, was something to be thankful for.

Priscilla wrote that her little girls (like all the other children in Rustdorf) were working hard for war relief in France, denying themselves candy and toys and wearing their old clothes to send more help to the "poor French and Belgian boys and girls." Matey found this devotion very touching and did not mind at all the superlatives in which Mme. Vinet and Ziza recounted it to the members of their circle. She sent Priscilla's children the little package of scrawled thank-you letters from the children at the Hendaye Home and suggested that they show them at school.

The news of the greatness of the "American effort" was constantly more impressive, more expansively described in the newspapers. Heatless days, lightless nights, automobiles emptied of their gasoline, wheatless bread, voluntary rationing of all kinds, wild bursts of enthusiasm, tremendous drives for the new loans. Matey was swept along with her French companions in their flight from the cold tragic realities about them into the Utopian conception of a golden America entirely inhabited by selfless philanthropic crusaders of the ideal. It sounded too wonderful! It was too wonderful.

In early January, which was again very cold that year, a letter came to Dominiqua from a cousin of hers who lived in Hendaye and did washing for the American Convalescent Home for children. She mentioned that she would soon have less work, because the house was to be closed before the first of February. Dominiqua showed this to Matey, who after some difficulty in making out the meaning from the phonetic spelling, told Dominiqua sharply, "There must be some mistake, of course. *Don't speak of this to Mme. Vinet or Mme. Ziza!*"

She dressed rapidly for the street, ran down the four flights of stairs, and hastened across Paris to the desk of the girl from Iowa. A new face, a sweet refined one, looked at her from behind it. A gentle Southern voice told her that in accordance with some changes in general policy the personnel in that office had been changed and that the work was being reorganized along new lines.

"Is it true," asked Matey, trembling with excitement, "that the Hendaye Convalescent Home for Children is to be *closed*, in midwinter, without any warning given their mothers, and those sick children returned from a southern climate to tenement-houses here without fire? It would mean pneumonia for every one of them. It would be murder."

The uniformed girl was startled by Matey's agitation. She said, edging her chair away from where Matey leaned belligerently over the desk, "I'm very sorry, but of course I don't know anything about this." Appealing to Matey's sense of fair play, she added with an apologetic little laugh, "You see, I never heard of any of this till this minute. I don't even know what you are—"

"You must have records," said Matey grimly. "They were always making records."

"Oh, we have our *own* records!" explained the girl hastily. *"Our* records deal with the medical supplies given out to French hospitals."

Matey stood still for a moment till she could control her voice. She was absurd, visiting her indignation on a well-bred girl who had no connection with the cause of it. Finally, "Will you tell me, please, to whom to apply for information about this?"

The girl answered with an understandable eagerness to be of help in moving Matey elsewhere, "Why don't you try the office on the next floor?" She gave complete instructions for finding it, and as Matey turned away she called after her forgivingly, "I *do* hope you'll get it all fixed up!"

In the next office the girl in charge of the desk was obviously not one of the *universitaires* and seemed ignorant of anything but stenography and the phrase, "Dr. Taylor is in an important conference." Matey said she would wait. She waited a long time, during which she recovered her *sang-froid* and was quite sure she was on a wild-goose chase. How foolish of her to go off half-cocked, to think for a moment that an organization of doctors and nurses would dream of returning sick children from a warm sunny climate to a cold damp one, in mid-winter, with practically no fuel in Paris tenement-houses. When Dr. Taylor (this was a new one she had never seen before) was at last finished with his conference she stepped quietly into his office and with complete self-possession, even almost apologizing for asking such a question, she stated her case.

But it was true, what Dominiqua's cousin in Hendaye had said. The work, so Dr. Taylor said, was being reorganized along new lines. It had been decided it would be wiser to withdraw from the running of convalescent homes for children in order to give more money and effort to other lines of work. With growing agitation Matey described the conditions of the children for whose going to the south she was responsible, and explained the home life to which they would come back, the unheated tenement-house rooms, poverty, overcrowding, all family plans laid for the absence of the children till spring, so that in many cases there would not even be beds for them.

Dr. Taylor expressed regret, looked at his watch, and said it was a general order with which he personally had nothing to do. It applied to all homes for children as well as to this one in which she was personally interested, she must understand.

Matey, trying hard and unsuccessfully to keep her voice steady, explained that it was simply impossible for those children to be brought back. "You *promised* those mothers!"

Dr. Taylor reminded her, "No American war relief workers ever enter into contracts, Madam."

Matey cried out wrathfully, "Oh, I don't mean *legally!*"

Dr. Taylor said he was really very sorry, but he was due at a conference. Matey found herself again in the outer office, trembling from head to foot.

She went outdoors into the street wrapped in its winter winding-sheet of gray mist. She stood still, thinking hard, till her hat and clothes were beaded with the moisture and her teeth began to chatter. Presently there before her in the stony French street stood the old beech tree at home, glorying in its battle with the storm. She closed her eyes to see it more clearly, and when she opened them she had said good-by to it.

If she sold their home and took all that was left of Aunt Connie's money . . .

She went back and was told that Dr. Taylor was at lunch. Oh, yes, it was time for lunch. She went home, sat at table with the family, listened to Petella's account of her part in a little play to be given at the Lycée, and returned to the office. Dr. Taylor was still out at lunch. Matey said she would wait.

When he came in she told him what she proposed to do. "What is left from an American war relief fund which I am administering will just about see them through to spring," she said in proper businesslike language. Dr. Taylor said that was very generous of her, but he was afraid it could not be managed. "You see," he explained patiently, "our organization is the one responsible for those children. We must return them to their homes. We can't possibly turn children entrusted to us over to private individuals. I don't doubt it would be all right in *this* case," he said with an accent which meant he doubted it very much, "but you see what an impossible precedent it would establish." He raised his voice a little, resenting Matey's blazing eyes. "How could *we* tell into whose hands they would ultimately fall? What guaranty have we that you would see the proper care is given them?"

"What guaranty would you require?" asked Matey in a suffocated voice.

Dr. Taylor rose. "There is no use going on discussing it in this unbusiness-like manner," he said. "Of course there is no guaranty which could be given by any private individual."

Matey would not be dismissed. "But suppose," she tried another way, "suppose I do not take over the running of the home at all, but just pay for its expenses, through your office, all regularly."

Dr. Taylor's patience was worn thin, "How in the world," he asked, "could we make an exception of one home? What would all the others think of such a discrimination? And what a childish idea that your special money could be kept separate from all the rest! There must be account-keeping, must there not? Have you any idea of the complexity of the business end of an organization like ours?"

Matey found herself in the outer office, alone with the khaki-clad stenographer. She sat for a time, clenching and unclenching her hands. Finally, "Will you please tell me the name of Dr. Taylor's superior officer?" she asked.

The girl looked at her with sympathy. "I will, dearie," she said, "but take it from me, it'll get you in awfully bad if you try to go over the old man's head. And you don't seem to be in any too good right now. There's nothing that slams the doors shut any quicker than appealing over the head of the officer you're doing business with."

Matey considered and asked for the address of the girl from Iowa. The stenographer put this question through one of the innumerable desk-phones which were the admiration of the French observers, and told Matey with an accent of envy, "All that bunch got to go to the front—lucky bums!"

Matey went home but ate no dinner. To Ziza and Mme. Vinet, anxious about her pallor and lack of appetite, she said she felt a little tired. This alarmed them almost as if she had fainted away on the floor, for until now she had moved steadily through whatever was to be done, as if made of steel.

She went the next day to consult a doctor about an imaginary child of hers, rickety, who had been sent to the south. "Would it be safe to bring him home now?" she asked.

"Now!" exclaimed the doctor, "In this weather? With the shortage of coal in Paris? A sickly child who has been in the south since November? It would be madness, Madame."

She managed by long waiting to have a moment's interview with a high official of the Red Cross, to ask what their policy was about bringing delicate children north from convalescent homes in the south. "Not before May," he told her with emphasis.

She went back to Dr. Taylor's office the next day. And the day after that, and the next day. She tried every door, told her story to every woman in khaki behind every desk she could find. She was seldom admitted to inner offices. The few higher officials of the organization she saw usually said they were very sorry (with a wary eye on her haggard face and wild eyes), but they had no connection at all with that branch of work. The girl in Dr. Taylor's office told her, "I'm very sorry, dearie, but Dr. Taylor says there's just no use going over and over that again."

Days were sliding by. The nurse in charge of the home at Hendaye, to whom she had written at once, said the date for the closing of the house had been set for the second of February. "It's a shame, too," she wrote; "I feel just as you do about it. The kids are improving a mile a minute. You ought to see those children from Lille playing tag! And I'm terribly scared of bronchitis and pneumonia if they're taken north now. I haven't said anything to them yet or to their folks, because I keep hoping the order will be changed. Can't you do anything about it? I feel sure you aren't getting hold of the right people. Have you seen Dr. Pennybacker? Try Miss Nourse."

One afternoon Matey, very pale now, for she had scarcely eaten or slept for days, sat in an outer office waiting for some one to return from lunch. She was trying to keep out of her mind the anxious tender mother-looks of the women at the station who had watched the children out of sight, and was turning over a manifestly insane idea of taking the children bodily on farther south into Spain, over the frontier, beyond French jurisdiction, when her eye fell on a proof-sheet of a booklet describing the organization's work and intended to help raise funds for it in America. It was headed by a list of names of prominent people high in its councils.

Mrs. Meade Whitlock's was one of them.

In half an hour Matey was explaining to the *concierge* of a very handsome apartment house beyond the Etoile that she wished to see Madame Veetloque, as she was an old friend of hers. After a suspicious look at her intense white face, and a reassured look at her respectable costume, the *concierge* let her in.

She began to run headlong up the velvet-clad stairs when she perceived that some one was coming down, a woman with a thin, swarthy, smoothed-up middle-aged face, in a beautifully furred cloak, Parma violets pinned to its lapel.

Holding herself by the railing, Matey began, hurriedly, "Mrs. Whitlock, I don't know whether you remember me—Matey Gilbert—Professor Gilbert's daughter, in Hamilton."

"Why, my dear *child!*" said Mrs. Whitlock in great astonishment. "No, for an instant I didn't recognize you. But of course I never dreamed of . . . you don't look very *well* to me. But I see the Gilbert look now of course, and your eyes haven't changed at all."

Matey's heart leaped. She could have fallen to her knees on the velvet carpet. She began her plea in an imploring voice, her eyes fixed on the miraculously unchanged face before her. She had advanced only a phrase or two when the other woman said, "Now, dear girl, do pardon me for being in a hurry. But these are busy days for us all. If I weren't rushed to death I'd take you right back up to my rooms to have tea with you and hear all the news of your family. About this matter too, of course. But I'm on my way to a very important tea, with an Ambassador. It may mean a great deal for Our Work. Never mind about details. I never go into details anyhow. Just tell me what it is you want."

"I want the children's home in Hendaye to go on till spring," said Matey, her heart in her blunt words.

They were walking down the stairs now and out toward the street.

"Who is in charge of that? I don't mean the nurse there—the official here."

Matey told her. She smiled. How well Matey remembered her smile!

"Well, I don't know *him* very well, but I know his superior officer. I can fix that for you in ten minutes," she said. "You just haven't got hold of the right people, that's all. One has to go at these things the right way. Now what's your address, so I can let you know?"

Matey gave it. Mrs. Whitlock reached into the recesses of an automobile which stood waiting for her, took out a notebook, and noted down the street and number. "Where is this hospital for soldiers that you don't want closed?" she asked, her pencil suspended over the paper.

"It's not a hospital," began Matey hastily, "and it's not for soldiers but for . . ."

Mrs. Whitlock interrupted her gently, "Never mind about details, dear. Just tell me where it is?"

Matey told her. The moving pencil wrote.

"Good-by," said Mrs. Whitlock, kissing Matey in the French manner. "*So* nice to have had a glimpse of you. *So* glad there is something I can do for your father's daughter. You were the *quaintest* little girl!"

Matey was playing the *one*-two-*three*-four infantile bass for an infantile four-handed arrangement of a Schubert folk march Mme. Vinet had made for Petella, when Dominiqua brought in a telegram. It read, "Glad to report your hospital will not close till May. Give my love to your brother Francis when you write. Meade Whitlock." When, the next day, Matey went to thank her, the *concierge* said that Mme. Veetloque had gone on a mission to the front.

Two days later came a telegram from the nurse in Hendaye, "All set to stay till May. You must have pushed the right button."

17

On the morning of the twenty-first of March Matey was still near the gates of the Lycée when an air-raid began. She had not known one to happen in the daytime, and this one was not preceded by the usual warning yells from steam sirens. But from the noise, a bomb had just been dropped not far from the street where she was walking.

She stood irresolute, heard nothing more, thought she had been mistaken, and stepped into a stationery shop to buy some of the ruled, glazed writing-paper preferred by the soldiers for their letters home. The stock of the shop was much depleted and the purchase took some time.

"That couldn't have been from a Boche plane, could it, Madame?" asked the woman in widow's black who waited on her, as she was wrapping up the package.

Matey had no time to answer before another explosion shook the walls of the room where they stood. Both women started, the involuntary flick of war-worn nerves with which in those years every one greeted any sudden sound. They stepped to the door and looked cautiously out and up. Not the slightest sign of aircraft.

"You would better stay here till it is over, Madame," said the proprietor of the store.

Matey sat down and waited. Presently—*crash!* another roar resounded, apparently much farther away this time, scarcely audible.

And now the sirens began to shriek out their frantic warnings.

"It must be an air-raid," said Matey, looking at her watch impatiently. She had many errands to do.

"Would you like to go down to the cellar?" said her involuntary hostess courteously.

"No, thanks, I never do," said Matey fatalistically.

"Nor I," murmured the other woman.

After listening for some time to the nerve-racking screech of the sirens and the rattling turmoil of the anti-aircraft guns, and hearing no more signs of air bombardment, Matey said, "It *must* be over, now." As she spoke, the room was shaken by an explosion perceptibly nearer than any of the others.

The sirens yelled more madly. The guns roared like thunder. Matey said, "That doesn't sound just like an air-raid!" the other answered, "No, so few bombs exploding. At such long intervals."

"I'm going to ask the *sergent de ville,*" said the shopkeeper, finally throwing a shawl around her head. Matey went with her down the street, emptied of all pedestrians but roaring like Niagara with a steam whistle being drawn through it by a red firetruck.

The *sergent de ville* waved the two women back excitedly. But as they ran they called out, "What is it? What *is* it?"

He threw up his hands. "You see. No signs of airplanes. But bombs being dropped. Perhaps the Boches have invented invisible aircraft! Get back to shelter, *quick!* Orders are to allow no civilians in the streets!" The two women scudded back up the street. Matey said breathlessly, "I have two children in the Lycée. I'm going in to be with them till I find out what this is."

Bang! came the explosion of a bomb, apparently a block or two away. The windows up and down the street rattled loudly.

"I have a little girl there, too," said the shopkeeper and pulled wildly on the Lycée bell. The door opened, the two women rushed into the dark vestibule.

Crossing the other end of the long vestibule was a procession of aproned children, bright-eyed, bright-haired, marching rapidly two by two toward a great door opening into blackness.

"Madame la Directrice has given orders for everybody to go to the cellar till this is over," explained the school *concierge.* Through the half-open door behind them a couple of white-faced women now pushed their way. "Are the children safe?" they cried to the *concierge,* who waved her hand toward the marching child army.

BANG! The massive walls of the Lycée shook.

A signal passed rapidly from one teacher to another. The one nearest the waiting women raised her hand, and from the children burst out fervently, "*All*ons, *enfants de* la *patrie!*" They sang as they marched swiftly forward, their bright-beribboned blonde and brown heads held high, as two by two they passed through the great door and disappeared into the darkness, their voices pouring up to join those of the later ranks.

"Didi! *ma chérie!*" called one of the women beside Matey.

A little girl turned her head and waved her hand to her mother, smiling but not ceasing to sing. "Petella and Adrien must have passed already," thought Matey.

The littler ones of the lower grades came now, bringing up the rear, marching hand in hand, stretching their short legs to keep step with the music. There was Brother, his hazel eyes bright in his excited little face, singing like a lark at Heaven's gate, his brown head thrown back, taking long manly strides.

Bang! a more distant explosion jarred faintly through the shut doors. The teacher marking time with her uplifted hand did not lose a beat. "*For*mons *nos batail*lons! *Mar*chons! *Mar*chons!" sang the last of the little children vanishing into the darkness.

The *concierge* said, "Mesdames, Madame la Directrice sends word that it would be most unsafe for you to return to the streets and invites you urgently to descend to the cellars till the raid is over. But please, she says, the utmost calm, and for the sake of the children whose mothers are not here, do not try to have your own with you."

Downstairs in a candle-lighted gloom were dim shapes of furnaces, steam pipes, garden tools, packing-boxes, coal shovels. and serried rank upon rank of children, cross-legged on the floor. Matey's eyes soon located Petella and little Adrien. Their eyes, like those of all the children, were on a teacher standing before them, a plain, pale-faced, middle-aged woman, a crocheted black wool fichu with scalloped edges cast about her shoulders.

"Now the song for the Belgians," she said, and blew softly on a little pipe to give them the key-note, beating time, "*now* . . ." they burst into the Brabançonne. "*Le roi, la loi, la liberté!*" sang the little republican French children with all their might.

The noise of the falling bombs was not so loud here, deep in the earth as they were. ("Half buried already," thought Matey.) Other women kept appearing on the stairs, other mothers came through shell-threatened streets as if their poor human presence could be of avail to their children. They reported in whispers that Paris was for once in a panic, everybody frantic with the eeriness of what was happening—exploding shells dropping from a perfectly clear sky. Had the Germans some balloon anchored above Paris far out of sight, thousands of feet high? The air was now full, they said, of French aircraft, flying wildly about in a vacancy punctuated at intervals by another mysterious murderous bomb. Ziza, very pale in her black dress and hat, came flying down the stairs, sought out Adrien with her eyes, saw Matey, and came to stand beside her.

A short, powerful-looking elderly woman, with graying black hair pulled straight back from a blunt-featured dauntless humorous face, stepped out in front of the children now. "Madame la Directrice! Madame la Directrice," murmured the women clustered by the door. One of them whispered passionately, "Isn't *anybody* going to have them say their prayers!"

Madame la Directrice smiled at the children, hooked her gold-rimmed eye-glasses to the front of her black alpaca dress with a homely quiet gesture, and began to speak. "*Eh bien, mes enfants,* your chance has come at last. This is a great day for you! Everybody else, your fathers and mothers, the soldiers, the hospitals, the nurses, all the grown-ups have been able, ever so many times, to show how brave-hearted men and women can be. But who ever thought that little children would have a chance, too, to add their share to the treasure-chest? For that's what every human being does, you know, when he does anything that's fine. He adds another gold-piece to the only real treasure there is, proofs that human life is worth living."

Bang! came a loud near-by explosion, followed by the crash of breaking glass upstairs.

The stout, elderly woman's head went up, "Do you hear that, *mes enfants?* That noise calls out to every one of you, 'This is *your* day of glory!' Whatever you do down here, even down to the littlest ones of the kindergarten, will add to or take away from the treasure-store of France, of every country, everywhere. If you meet danger bravely here, everybody who ever hears about it, even years from now, perhaps when you are old people, will be braver when his turn comes to meet danger, because he'll think, 'What children did, I can do!'

"What do you say—suppose we toss into the treasure-chest our own special French coin, that's not only gold with courage in the face of danger, but bright with gayety too. Don't you think it would be fun to give an entertainment to each other, *à l'improviste?* Some of you can give recitations, I know. Marie-Louise and Paulette Audibert have just learned a pretty dance. I'll do my share. I know how to make a franc come out of my ear . . . you never guessed that, did you? What do you say, my children? Shall we march? *Allons, enfants de la patrie!*"

She paused. The children, who had not taken their eyes from her, began to clap their hands and shout.

A woman near Matey and Ziza said disapprovingly, "I always heard she was a terrible internationalist, but I never believed it before."

Another murmured, "I think it's pagan of her not to have them say their prayers!"

The kindergartners, marshaled by their black-clad elderly teacher, now stood before the rest of the school.

"This is a song everybody knows," said the teacher. "All of you join in the refrains." A bird-like chirping rose in the air, sweet with the tunelessness of small children.

"Il était une bergère . . ."

The other children, amused by the little ones, came in promptly with the refrain, *"eh ron, eh ron, petit pat-a-pon!"*

Crash! the whole building shook as if in an earthquake. Bits of dirty rubbish pattered down on the smooth bright heads. The little voices quavered off into whimpers, and the children huddled together with an animal motion of panic. Their teacher's smiling face bent over them tenderly, as beating time she gave them the cue to go on. "Qui *gardait ses moutons . . .*"

"Ton! ton!" came automatically from the older children.

"Why *don't* they say their prayers!" came in an hysterical whisper from the mother near Matey.

They were all singing, full-throated now, the old nursery song, setting about them its thousand associations of home and safety.

Madame la Directrice approached the group of mothers and stopped to say a friendly word in a low tone. "I'm going to my office to telephone to the Ministry of Instruction and see if anything has been found out and what the other *lycées* are doing."

When she came down again she announced to the mothers gravely, "Nobody has any idea still what it can be. No enemy airplanes in sight, the bombardment continuing regularly from some invisible force. No children are being sent home until this is over."

The children were laughing now over the antics of three Fifth Graders. They were going through the first part of *Le Médecin malgré lui* and had come to the always enchanting scene of the thrashing of Sgnarelle.

"Aie! Aie! Aie!" shrieked the child playing the woodchopper.

Bang! crash! resounded from the world above.

"Ha ha! ha!" shouted the laughing children.

Ziza had read, as they all had, the unspoken word which had been in the mind of the Directrice when she went to ask for more news. Looking at Matey now, she shaped it with her lips silently —"Gas?"

That was what they were all thinking. If this was the beginning of an attack on the city by poison gas . . .

Matey made with her shoulders the shrugging gesture of "nothing to be done." But it came to her with a shock that if it *was* gas, they would never any of them go up those stairs alive.

She fumbled suddenly in her hand-bag for a bit of paper, pulled out the only thing she found, an old envelope, and began hastily to write on the back.

Hours afterward, when the shelling had stopped for the day, when the explanation of the mystery had flown from mouth to mouth all over the city, when Gallic sprightliness had already given a gamin name to the great cannon threatening the city, the tired children were tucked into their beds in the apartment on the rue de Fleurus and the four women gathered for a futile council of war. As long as the children were within earshot the talk had been kept on a steady, quiet tone. Mme. Vinet gave her usual sympathetic attention to little Adrien's account of how killingly funny the first part of *Le Médecin malgré lui* was, and to Petella's announcement of the wonderful news that there were no lessons to prepare—*"Chic alors! Hot* dog!" commented the bi-lingual little American girl gleefully.

But when Matey came back from her bedtime reading-aloud to the children she found Ziza giving a full account of what had happened at the Lycée to her mother, who sat very still, shading her eyes with one hand as she listened.

At the end she asked, "Were you frightened, you and Mété? Really frightened, I mean?"

Ziza answered with her usual outspoken frankness, "Simply scared sick! It was not knowing what it might be, of course. Did you and Dominiqua think it might be a gas attack from the air? We did. All of us at the same minute, from something the Directrice said. The woman in front of me began to pray as fast as she could, and Matey started writing her last message to her husband."

"Did I write something?" asked Matey, surprised. "I don't remember that."

"You don't!" said Ziza. "Why, yes, you scribbled away for a minute or two, and when the next shell exploded, you slipped the paper back into your hand-bag."

Matey went to look for this, feeling now a dim muscular memory of the actions Ziza had described.

Yes, there was the envelope, one with an American stamp, and Priscilla's dear handwriting on it. She turned it over. On the back was scrawled, almost illegibly. "Priscilla, when Father was dying he was afraid, dreadfully afraid, and it was Mother he—Mother stood by him and helped him through the— Priscilla, they always had so much more against them than we knew. Even to come together, it had to be over a broken heart and a broken faith. There was always . . ."

She looked up at Ziza. "Yes, I remember now. It was something I'd been intending to tell my sister."

She looked again at the bald words lying dead on the paper. What could Priscilla make of them—the Priscilla of the present as life had shaped her? With a sigh she tore the envelope across and threw it into the fire. "But I don't believe I'll send it after all," she told Ziza.

Now she knew there weren't any words that could make Priscilla understand. She had waited too long.

18

THE day after the German advance on the Soissons front began, Mme. Letellier from Crouy arrived at the door with her little son and two unknown little girls in bedraggled first communion dresses, all incoherent with fatigue and fright. "Everybody's being evacuated this time," she told them, "whether they want to stay or not. When the Boches came through at the beginning of the war, some people with a sick person, or somebody very old to look out for, stayed on. But now after what happened in Belgium they don't dare let anybody stay. The big army camions came through Crouy, picking up everybody—and some American ambulances too, Mme. Fort, are being used to evacuate people—not a soul is allowed to stay." She was in the first stage of refugee hysteria, the phase which came before the half-dead passivity of those who had been refugees for a longer time. She could not stop her excited account: "They drove right up to the church—on First Communion Day! The bishop was just beginning to go down the line before the altar when two great camions drove up to the door and took us all away, the bishop just the way he was, in his— They'd put old Mme. Rillier in our camion; she's been paralyzed for years, and she died of the fright before we'd been gone half an hour, but we couldn't stop, we had to bring her along dead—with all those children around her corpse. Oh, when I think of my poor house! I'd just had the walls of the kitchen—"

They expected then at any moment to see Mimi and her boys arrive from La Ferté. But instead a telegram from Mimi came: "Ordered to evacuate can Mété come to get boys." They could make nothing of it. When Mme. Letellier heard it, she began to cry again. "Oh, they did get through to La Ferté! Then they must have gone through Crouy. Oh, my poor garden! The strawberries just ripening."

Ziza said, "If the Germans are as far as La Ferté they will soon be in Paris. We will be evacuated too."

Matey had thought of a face-saving explanation of Mimi's asking for her rather than for Ziza or her mother. "Perhaps those American ambulances which Mme. Letellier says are helping belong to Adrian's section, and Mimi thinks I might be useful."

"Perhaps," said Mme. Vinet.

"But you can't go, Mme. Fort," cried Mme. Letellier. "Nobody is allowed."

"Or perhaps," said Ziza, "it's because Matey has a *permis de séjour* for the army zone."

"At any rate," said Matey, "if Mimi telegraphs in this way, it must be that she has some very good reason for not coming with the boys. Perhaps she's needed to care for some sick person who's to be evacuated. I must go."

She soon found that her *permis de séjour* was of no avail, not even supplemented by all the *Système D* she had learned in three years of evading military regulations. At the Gare de l'Est, crowded with excited refugees, there was no ticket window open for tickets to the war zone. The sentry by the entrance of the train shed, on whom she began to try some of the inventions which had been worked out for getting around sentries, looked stonily over her head, as if he had been a German. She went finally to the Paris office of Adrian's ambulance service, not knowing what she expected to do. But when, as she approached the office, she saw the boy from Dutchess County standing in front of the door in the street, she knew very well what she would try to do.

"Hello, Mrs. Fort," he greeted her, "you still in Paris? If I were you I'd take the kids and beat it. Everything with wheels is being ordered out into the Marne valley to bring in 'civils.' They don't tell us why, but they don't have to. It's a cinch they don't expect to hold 'em this time. At the rate Ludendorff's traveling he'll be in Paris in a week."

Matey said, "Do you remember you said you'd see that I was sent home to be buried? Well, there's something I want much more than that—"

When, four hours later, in the dusk of the May evening, Matey crept out from the back of the ambulance, the boy said, "Looky here, Mrs. Fort, this would get me in *bad* if—"

"Nobody'll know," she told him, "ever. How could they? They're coming around to evacuate this quarter at dawn tomorrow, you say. Well—I'll just get evacuated with the others. You don't suppose they're going to ask for papers of identity at such a time! Don't forget that if there's ever any way I can make up to you for helping me—"

He blushed. "Oh, that's all right—that's all right! Not much to do for the wife of my old Chef de Section. Worst luck I ever had was to get transferred out of his section. I always did like Lieutenant Fort; he's so damned unmilitary." He saw the last of his convoy disappearing around a turn of the street and drove off hastily.

Matey went to ring the bell of Mimi's house. No one answered. She tried the knob of the door, and it turned. She stepped in and called. No one answered. She went hastily about the house, noting the evidence in dust and disorder of the careless housekeeping recently done there. The kitchen stove was still faintly warm. They could not be far. Perhaps they were at the factory next door. She made her way there in the gathering twilight. The factory itself was dark, but there were lights in the little building where the offices were installed. Matey went up and knocked on the door. Mimi opened it, standing belligerently on the threshold till she saw who was there. Then, with a cry of welcome—"Oh, I *knew* you'd come!"—she drew her in.

Behind her stood a young girl in an apron, evidently a maid, and the boys Mimi would not bring to see their grandmother. Their faces were pale under their close-cropped dark hair, and they looked frightened and half sick, but—French to the last breath—they advanced to shake hands ceremoniously with Maman's friend. Matey kissed the youngest one, a couple of years older than Petella, whom she had seen as a baby on her wedding trip, her heart yearning over his strained wide eyes and colorless little mouth.

"I told you, boys, that Tante Mété would come!" Mimi said to them triumphantly, "Now you're all right, my darlings; you'll have somebody to go with you right to Grand'mère's door."

The youngest began to cry, leaning his head against his mother's skirt, and saying in a low mournful voice, "I *wish* you'd come with us, Maman!"

"You know why I am staying, René," Mimi reminded him with a noble accent. "Be a man, my little son. Remember a Frenchman cannot be afraid of anything."

"But, Mimi, why *are* you staying?" Matey asked the question at last.

Mimi looked at her in astonishment and then around her at the desks, the large locked safe, the typewriters, the filing cabinets, which furnished the dingy room. "Do you suppose for a moment I'm going to abandon my children's patrimony?" she asked indignantly.

One of the many scenes which Matey tried in vain to forget was Mimi's struggle the next morning with the weary gray-haired French reserve sergeant who, climbing down from the American Field Service Ambulance, came in to evacuate the office. "Pardon, Monsieur," said Mimi, standing in an attitude of authoritative self-confidence, "I send my children. But *I* remain to protect my husband's business."

Matey gathered the boys around her, motioned to the little serving-maid to follow her, and started down the walk to the street. Behind her she heard Mimi's voice rising hysterically. "I have given every drop of my heart's blood to save this business. For three years I have done nothing but labor for it. Let them kill me if they will—I will *not* let the Boche . . ." The door of the office slammed shut.

Matey hurried her little flock toward the ambulance, nodding to the American boy on the driver's seat and explaining, "I'm an American too," as she helped the children climb up into the back of the vehicle.

"You don't *say!*" said the boy in a slow, beautiful Southern accent. He looked around at her curiously. They waited. The office door remained closed. "Was theh somethin' heavy to ca'y out, I wonder?" asked the driver.

"I think not," said Matey, trying to think of something else. Little René was shivering and crying noiselessly. She drew him into her lap and began to tell him a story. Presently she saw the door of the office open. Mimi appeared, *hatless,* like a peasant woman! Her face was very red and set. She was followed by the gray-haired sergeant, both of them loaded to the eyes with huge account books. From the driver's seat came a soft comment: "Well, I've evacuated a lot of folks and I've seen 'em ca'y out most eve'thing from canary-birds to pigs, but I neveh saw a *lady* so set on bookkeepin'!"

Matey was impressed to the point of alarm by a bourgeoise forgetting her hat, wondered whether she would better remind her of it, looked at her face and decided not to.

The books were piled in under the bench which ran along each side of the ambulance; the reserve sergeant helped Mimi in and climbed wearily to the driver's seat, where he lighted a cigarette and relapsed into silence. "He's a good old scout if he is a Frawg," the boy from the South told Matey as the Ford roared into low speed. "He manages refugees bettah than anybody I eveh worked with. And, believe me, they take some managin'."

They drove on in silence, out of the court of the factory into the street, and stopped before a poor small house, from which instantly, in humble readiness, emerged a peasant woman and three children, all carrying large bundles tied up in bedding.

"It's a good thing this is my last stop," said the driver. "Looks like they wouldn't be any mo' room after those bundles get stacked up."

The newcomers stored their bundles as best they could, climbed in silently. The ambulance rolled on.

The peasant woman had a rosary in her hand and now bent her head over it, her lips moving rapidly in a low murmur. With a strange look at Matey, half defiance, half exaltation, Mimi drew a rosary from the bosom of her dress. But she did not begin to say her prayers. She paused, her eyes on Matey's. For the first time Matey felt something of Adrian's father on her tongue. She said, with no effort, naturally, with a friendly smile, just what she felt. "Now, Mimi dear, don't take for granted that I will criticize and not understand."

Mimi looked at her attentively with an expression Matey found very touching—as if she found sympathy too much to hope for.

She went on, "Dear Mimi, why do you hold us all off at arm's length so about this?"

"*I* don't!" cried Mimi, astonished and indignant at the idea. This was not at all, apparently, what she had expected Matey to say. "It's the others who do—Maman, Ziza, Henri! They're the ones who act as though I had— Mété, I've felt all along as though you were my only friend there. Tell me, *why* do they treat me as though it were— Why won't they even let me tell them about it! *Why* do they keep that stiff, cold, careful silence!"

"Well, I won't," said Matey, reaching to give her hand a friendly clasp, "if you'll give me half a chance."

"Oh, Mété, you don't know what it means to me— How can Maman feel anything but thankfulness for me! She must see that it has given me the first happiness I ever knew. All my life I've missed it, and after the war began—no, Mété, really, honestly we would all go mad if the world were what people without faith think it is. How *could* Maman have let us children grow up without any defense against such a world! She must have seen that I was starving for faith. Alone in hell—that's where my mother left me! How can anybody blame me for wishing to save my children from that awful desolation of living without God? I know what it is. I lived in it without knowing it all my life, and then in those first weeks of the war—I knew it for what it was. I don't see how we didn't all go insane, reeling along in the darkness—going nowhere. If it hadn't been for religion we would have. It was the sight of Sœur Sainte Julienne which first showed me the light." She looked full at Matey and said with energetic certainty, "Do you suppose that a woman without faith *could* face danger as she has?"

Matey thought of Madame la Directrice and the teachers, but was silent, determined not to act as the Vinets did!

"Mété, such inner peace as I have had! Since the day I was baptized. Since the day of my first communion. Peace is something nobody *can* know outside the Church. When I think how long I lived without once leaning on the inexpressible comfort of authority!" Matey did not say a word nor change the expression of her eyes, but Mimi added quickly, defiantly, "Mété, there *must* be authority! Since I have been in active life I have seen that we can't live for a moment in the material world without it. Why should we think we can live spiritually in anarchy? We can't. I will not leave my children in spiritual anarchy, let Maman think what she will!"

The energy of her speech mounted from word to word. Her eyes were exalted. "Mété, why won't they let me talk to *them* this way? Tell them. Explain! You do understand, don't you? Can't you?"

"Well, I don't know that I understand exactly. But I can certainly sympathize. Not because I'm any better than they. You know in America we don't feel so strongly, in fact not strongly at all, about differences of religion. My own mother went into a sisterhood before she died, and we never dreamed of feeling badly about it. It's not hard for me to . . ." She ventured a timid plea for Mme. Vinet, dreadfully afraid of alienating Mimi. "But, *ma chérie,* couldn't you think of how it seems to your mother—to have you keep your boys away . . ."

"I *must* protect their faith till it has grown firm," cried Mimi desperately. "It's for Maman to understand how a mother feels for her children!"

The ambulance stopped with a suddenness which almost sent them to the floor in a heap.

Matey, nearest the driver's seat, asked him what was the trouble. In a vexed accent he said over his shoulder, "Bridge blown up. I thought I'd beat the engineers to it, but they beat me. I'd ought to have taken the long way around, after all."

"Why didn't you?" asked Matey.

"Well, there's a piece of it I sort of hated to take ladies and children along," said the Southern boy gently. He swung his awkward car around. "I reckon I'll have to," he said, starting back, and beginning to whistle "It's a long long road."

Inside the ambulance every one except Matey was praying. She saw that the moment had passed in which she could have gone on with her appeal to Mimi for more gentleness to Mme. Vinet. She had been shocked by the bitterness in Mimi's tone when she spoke of her mother. The ambulance was filled by the sound of sibilant murmured words, the repeated appeal for help, *"Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae."*

Mimi's boys, each with a rosary in his hand, were murmuring devoutly in unison with the three peasant children.

Mimi interrupted herself to whisper to Matey, "You can't think, too—though that's such a small matter compared to the greatness of having found God—how happy it makes me to be one with the rest of my country—as my boys are now, brothers to these simple people we never saw before—not to stand out, as our family did, hostile hard rebels from the faith which has always saved France. For you know, Mété, this war was a punishment for the unbelief of France."

Matey nodded something vague. Mimi bowed her head over her rosary again. As Matey watched she saw her face become serene and remote.

Matey wondered where they might be and found that by tipping her head to one side she could catch glimpses of the country through the crevice between the driver and the elderly Frenchman. They were passing through farm land, rolling and rich in carefully tended wheat fields, already jewel-green with young wheat, the old Aryan treasure that would so long outlive them all. From time to time they passed a heap of bricks and beams that had been a house. The car was going very slowly, with many outrageous jolts. She guessed that this was one of the roads of which Adrian so often wrote, badly shelled and hastily repaired. They were passing a cemetery now, the tombs clustered around a great cross, on which was the inscription, "Love ye one another."

"We'll soon be out of this, ma'am," said the American boy, apologizing for a back-breaking jolt.

"How kind that boy is!" thought Matey. "How unblunted by the war!"

His driving now took all his attention. He stopped whistling as he steered a slow zigzag way between the worst of the holes. Leaning forward more as he did, he widened the aperture through which Matey was observing the world.

Down the road she saw a small square stucco house, slightly less ruined than most of those they were passing, although one corner of the roof was out. She recognized it as they came nearer. It was what was left of Mimi's pleasant little country home. She hoped Mimi would not look up.

Odd—the house, ruined as it was, seemed full of people. As the ambulance slowly advanced she made out dark forms leaning from the windows, others apparently asleep in the little latticed summer house in the garden. But they did not stir. And what strange stiff grotesque attitudes!

The ambulance drew near. A frightful stench filled the air. She saw them plainly now, had one full view of the ruined house and the rotting dead men.

The driver looked around uneasily and saw her horrified stare. "You see, ma'am, they had a right smart fight takin' that house, and there hasn't been time enough yet to get eve'body buried. This sector's got American troops in it now and our rule is first bury our own folks, and then the Frawgs and then the horses and then the Boches."

They jolted by. The driver began to whistle "Over There."

Matey looked quickly at Mimi again. But her head was still bent. Her face was still remote and radiant. She had seen nothing but her rosary.

19

THE summer of 1918, the summer when the tide turned, when in a daze people began to try to open their minds to the thought that the war might not go on forever, was the summer when Henri Vinet was killed.

There had been one of the terrifying silences with no letter from Henri for a week. Then for ten days. On the eleventh the news came in a letter from the front, from a comrade of Henri's. He had been one of their guests, knew the family, and wrote to Matey, asking her to tell Henri's mother and sister.

Matey was the one who opened the door to the *concierge* with the mail. She tore open the letter addressed to her in a strange handwriting, her hands wet with a sudden icy perspiration. The news was on the first page. She read it at a glance and remained perfectly motionless, looking down at the words.

At the other end of the hall Mme. Vinet's door opened. Matey did not look up.

Henri's mother stepped forward to meet the execution of the death sentence which had hung over her so long.

"Mon fils est mort," she said.

Like a frightened child Matey put her crooked arm up over her face as if to ward off a blow.

But it did not fall. Of all in the apartment, Mme. Vinet remained the strongest. As if they were children again Matey and Ziza clung to her. She grew old, old and withered and bent, from one day to the next. But she did not falter. She was still Maman.

Once, walking with her under the summer trees of the Luxembourg, while the four children played (for little Mélanie was old enough now to run about and was zestfully thrusting her way up into life), Matey said impulsively, "How can you? I wish I knew from where you draw your strength!"

Mme. Vinet, small, bent, old in her black dress and long veil, said, "Dear child, it is the only way left me of being worthy of Henri and Polo and their father. I mean by that of standing by their ideals—mine too. You see, Mété, there's a higher standard of courage to which we must live up, we people who have no ready-made God to fall back on who'll take care of us if we'll only worship him. We must be strong enough not to shirk our share of creating God in man."

Quietly as this had been spoken, Matey knew it referred to the situation at the apartment. The silences there had been heartbreaking. Mme. Vinet's silence during the murmur of Latin prayers, Mimi's silence when, her head high, her face set, she signaled to her sons to cross themselves at the beginning of a meal. And since Henri's death—had there been a dreadful sort of rivalry of endurance between the representatives of the two opposing creeds? That over Henri's death—! No, no, that must be an ignoble fancy of her own, born of the nervous tension, of the almost intolerable state of siege, at the apartment . . . five women and ten children living on top of each other, mattresses laid on the floors, the daily bombardment of the city by the great cannon, and a constant expectation of summons to leave the city, valises packed in readiness for instant departure.

Then the tide turned, and with dream-like rapidity the *dénouement* of the drama drew near.

The first result of it as far as they were concerned was the permission for civilians to return to the evacuated regions south of Soissons. The first train available took Mme. Letellier and Mimi back to their homes, not irreparably injured, they wrote, for the rush to and fro of troops had been too hurried for systematic looting. At once geographic separation began to perform its usual miracle of reducing personal friction. Mimi's letters sounded more natural than any of her talk had been. Ziza and her mother spoke of her in a more natural tone.

Heartened by this, Matey made her one effort toward reconciliation. Since neither Ziza nor her mother would speak to her, she would speak out herself. She chose a time when she and Ziza were alone together outdoors, walking home from an afternoon's work at the *vestiaire* on the rue Pascal.

"See here, Ziza," she said. "I can't understand you and your mother—so loving, so kind—why can't you let Mimi enjoy her conversion in peace? It means so much to her. What harm does it do you?"

Ziza answered quickly, "Maman is the one who feels it—that way. I don't, not in the least. I'm perfectly tolerant in matters of religion. But for Maman—for all of her generation and Papa's—I don't suppose you could possibly understand, Mété, not being French, what it means to Maman. You seem to think it's just a personal religious matter. In France it's not. It's everything. Maman feels that it strikes at the root of all that she and Papa believed in, gave their lives to, fought for, taught to Mimi. In France it doesn't mean just going to Mass, you know, it means—to Maman, anyhow—going back on everything free and humane, attacking the public schools, personal dignity, above all, treason to humanity. That's how it seems to her, like treason."

Matey asked, "But, Ziza, if you don't share your mother's feeling, why didn't you let little Adrien go out to visit Mimi last summer?"

"Ah, I'd just as soon not have my son exposed to proselytizing till his judgment is a little more mature," said Ziza coolly. "After all, you know, those two ways of looking at life are absolutely opposed. What's the use of pretending they can be reconciled? No, I don't feel at all as Maman does. It's no business of mine what other people believe. All religions are very much the same anyhow. What I can't stand is the arrogance of any one religion that claims to provide the *only* road to Heaven. That's so absurd!"

Before her trip in the ambulance Matey would have given it up then. But now she said pleadingly, "But, Ziza, in such a time as this . . ."

"That sounds to me like Anglo-Saxon sentimentality. Because we may all be dead tomorrow, is that a reason for saying you believe in what you don't?"

Matey persisted. "Can't you see for yourself what a transformation it has made in her?" She thought of the serene remote face bent over the rosary. "Mimi's like another person. Happier than ever before in all her life."

"It's discovering she has Tante Caroline's gift for business that's made her over," said Ziza uncompromisingly. "She's simply crazy about running that factory. You just wait! My poor old brother-in-law won't have so much as a seat in the office when he comes back."

Matey never spoke of it again. It was, along with nearly everything else personal, thrust into the background by the news from the front. They found they could not believe it, that they had not really dared to hope that peace might come again, any more than a man whose leg had been amputated hopes ever to have it back again. September had been full of incredible news of Allied victories and the breakdown of German militarism and despotism. Matey and all about her had learned in a hard school to give little credence to what they read or heard. But this hope came to them from everywhere at once. To Mme. Vinet and her circle at the Lycée, lifelong liberals, as stirring as the approach of victory was the news of the emergence to life and power of the liberal element in Germany, the creation of the Czecho-Slovak Republic, the promise of the Allies to create a free Poland, above all the personality of the American President. Henri's mother took with passion the hope, the only one left, that out of the evil that had come to her, to every one, somehow good might come. Her eager joy in victories that were not military was her way of keeping alive the spirit of her husband and sons.

One of Adrian's furloughs fell in the last part of September. Mme. Vinet's welcome made him feel that she thought of him as the last son remaining to her. "But I'm no son for a Frenchwoman, let her be as liberal as she may," he told Matey; "I'm nobody's son but my father's. I'm more a Friend than ever before. No, I never was a Friend before. But I am now. I don't believe in anything that's had by force. I don't think you get it at all. You just have to go back to the beginning and start over again if you're going to have it. Not that I care." He looked, in fact, far too tired to care for anything. But he never argued with Mme. Vinet, he always gently turned the subject. On the evening of the twenty-ninth of September, when she sat reading aloud to the assembled family the telegraphed account of President Wilson's speech at New York, he listened quietly, making no comment, smoking his pipe, a patient expression on his face.

"First, the impartial justice meted out must involve no discrimination between those to whom we wish to be just and those to whom we do not wish to be just. Second, no special or separate interests of any single nation or group of nations can be made the basis of any part of the settlement which is not consistent with the *common interest of all.*

"Lastly, all international agreements must be made known in their entirety to the rest of the world!"

Ziza cried out, "*Vive l'Amérique!* It's not on the old continent of Europe that such statesmen are grown."

Mme. Vinet said to Ziza, "I wish thy father could have lived to hear the ruler of a great nation speak out like this for justice and democracy." To Matey she said, trying to control her shaking lips, "Your President makes me hope, for the first time, that Polo and Henri did not die in vain."

Matey said anxiously, "You mustn't idealize President Wilson."

"Idealize him?" said Ziza. "You have heard his words. What praise could equal them?"

After that Matey's uneasiness ebbed low and flowed high in alternations of excitement. There were times when she was caught up with every one else into a collective madness of hope and ardor over the American attitude as voiced by President Wilson. There were nights when she woke up suddenly to a sick memory of the American bureaucrats who had almost brought those children back to winter Paris.

For one whole day, the eleventh of November, she put her doubts aside. When the announcing cannon had boomed the news, she and Ziza ran wildly down the street to the Lycée, their first thought to tell the children. At the Lycée gates they met the children, dismissed from school, their first thought to tell their mothers. Matey saw Petella and Brother emerge on the run from the crowd, eyes blazing, faces paper-pale. "Maman!" they screamed, when they saw her there. "Maman! *La guerre est finie!*" Matey let them be the bearers of the news.

As Ziza, kneeling on the sidewalk, took her little boy into her arms he asked her, in a low tone as though he feared to say it aloud, "Maman, can we go back home now?" Matey knew then as though she saw them on the train for Louvain that Ziza would take her husband's son back to his father's home. But in the changes that were coming to them all what would become of Ziza's mother?

They went through the roaring, shouting, weeping crowds on the streets back to that mother and found her at the piano, the tears streaming down her face. All that day, at intervals, when her emotion was more than she could endure, she fled to her music again, leaning with all her weight on it. Matey thought, "Nobody can get along—it's not just Mimi—without souls stronger than his to lean on!"

The next weeks! They never seemed to Matey like weeks of earthly life but of a long half-fevered, half-exalted dream, filled with intense feelings set intensely against one another.

The drawing aside of the veil which had so long hidden people in the occupied regions of the north brought to the apartment in the rue de Fleurus the families of the soldiers to whom they had been *marraines de guerre*. Nothing that they had lived through was harder than thus to see men two years dead die once more. Throughout the four years of prison these sallow withered women had looked forward to the moment of reunion, and when they were released nothing awaited them but a grave.

To see them, to talk to them, to sit by and watch them weep, to try to bring to mind the last words or some living memory of the men who had been the core of their lives—for the first time Mme. Vinet and Ziza shrank from what was to be done. "Mété, you see Mme. Morelle. I can't stand any more. I've just been to the cemetery to show Mme. Goureaud where her son's grave is." They dreaded a knock on the door. Matey took more of this work than the three widows in the apartment, and with justice. It did not make her live over again such losses as theirs, now freshly present to their minds. For with the cessation of actual danger to those left alive, a throbbing came into wounds that had been numb. For the first time Matey found Dominiqua weeping over her dead son's photograph, and Mme. Vinet put away all the books of Henri and Polo.

This freshening of grief it was which lay at the bottom of the intensity of the feeling everywhere about the approaching Peace Conference. Women for whom personal affection had been all, who never before had felt the remotest connection with politics, now found the dignity of their deepest personal loves helplessly dependent on politicians. Every woman Matey knew stood beside a newly made grave. With the fierceness of women guarding their dead from desecration they cried out in horror at the implication that their sons and husbands and brothers had died to win material advantages. Of all the rulers of the world the American President seemed the only one capable of understanding that to kill the hope that those deaths had advanced the cause of all humanity was to kill the dead men over again. The American President alone seemed to share their consternation at a future which brought no spiritual rewards for the ignominy of the war.

Again and again Matey saw this drama act itself out before her.

For days, when the newspaper talk of the settlement-to-be echoed with material advantages, material revenges to be had, a sort of shamed paralysis of the heart descended upon the hard-working women in Matey's group, almost worse than the honest fear and sorrow they had known. And then, bold, high, generous, infinitely comforting to their half-murdered sense of human dignity, came another Wilsonian statement. The group in the rue de Fleurus, like many such groups, read aloud every word from Washington, making a little ceremony of it, keeping the children up from bed to hear. Even Dominiqua, to whose old Basque total illiteracy the war had been as without meaning as a bad dream, asked every day if *le Président Veelson* had sent another piece for the paper. She too in the evening brought her knitting in to listen devoutly to the good words she could not understand.

"It's like the Fifth Symphony played out with all the world as orchestra," said Mme. Vinet again and again. "Just when there seems no one great enough to meet the challenge of the war—" She ran to the piano, summoning Beethoven to say the rest.

Matey discounted this both in her thoughts and in her letters to Adrian. "Of course there may not be many like them," she wrote. "The Vinets—all the Lycée faculty—belong by lifelong association to that class, so small in any country, the dyed-in-the-wool liberals." But how to explain—could it really be a *universal* response to idealism—the sort of madness for Wilson which she felt everywhere? Why were pictures of him, cut from newspapers, pinned up on the walls wherever she came and went? Why did such pictures appear in the shops, everywhere? And when it appeared, a huge photograph, in the *loge* of the *concierge* . . . !

And yet she was not in the least prepared to have Mme. Vinet, who had no taste for street gatherings, and like other liberal bourgeois detested too close personal contact with working-people, cancel a morning's appointments in order to be present at the arrival of President Wilson. Not only Mme. Vinet but all the family. "You're not going to take a two-year-old child out to that?" asked Matey, astonished, seeing Mme. Vinet struggling to incase the bouncing little Mélanie's plump legs in leggings.

"I don't want to make anybody stay at home to take care of her," explained Mme. Vinet.

"Dominiqua's not going!"

"She certainly is!"

"Couldn't we leave the baby just for that hour at the Lycée kindergarten?"

"The Lycée's closed for the day!"

So they went along together, every one of them, the first time they had all been out on the street at the same time. When they came to the appointed street, lined with crowds and police, they took turns in holding on their shoulders the lively little girl whose father had been a German, while they waited in the bright winter sunshine for the American President. The crowd about them was made up of just such people as they, women in black like Ziza and Mme. Vinet, hatless working-women like Dominiqua, some with men in working-clothes or uniforms, all with children.

Matey was painfully affected by the excitement of their faces and talk. Back of them she saw weeks such as the Vinets had lived, weeks of heartsick waiting for some vision of the future which would give them self-respect enough to go on into more of human life. Contact with each other here brought their collective ardor to a fever. When the guns boomed out a distant warning of the arrival of the train at the station the crowd surged forward in a rush that made Matey tremble. A woman near her shocked her by saying hysterically, "It's on our knees we should be!" Every one made way so that the children could see. An escort of bicycle police flashed by. Down the street a sound of frantic cheering broke out. There was no military music, no roll of drums, only a car rolling quietly along the pavement. The cheering swept down toward them, the crest of its wave almost visible above the shouting crowd. Matey saw Mme. Vinet begin to cheer and wave her handkerchief. Ziza was crying.

The car was before them. Matey received two staggering shocks in the same instant: one, the wild single shout that broke out as the car passed, shaking her as if she had been at the center of a clap of thunder; the other, a clear sight of the cause of this portent—a long bony college professor's face, with a pleased smile on the thin lips.

20

"YES," said Matey to the elegant *chasseur* of the hotel, "that's the name. M. Francis Gilbert."

Francis was there in a moment, even more elegant than the *chasseur*. "All set, Matey dear," he said genially. "And I've got a mighty interesting bunch to dine with us."

He led the way into a near-by salon, said, "Just a jiff, I've got to look up Parkinson," and left her in a room which looked to her quite incredibly handsome and well kept up. As she looked from the huge and quite unbroken panes of the windows to the brocade on the chairs and the velvet carpet, Matey thought of the threadbare dinginess of the Vinet apartment. She remembered Francis's expression as he had looked about him at the window-glass mended refugee-fashion with adhesive tape, at the patched upholstery, and his silent surprise at the meagerness of the meal offered him—and yet they had prepared what they thought a feast. But how nice he had been! He had only looked surprised and interested, not scornful at all. How magnificently respectful he had been to Mme. Vinet! Perhaps a shade too showily so; it almost set off and made more visible her threadbare shabbiness. They had really all grown very shabby, thought Matey, looking around her with Francis' eyes. But Mme. Vinet might have been in point lace for all his manner showed. And this evening he had not given a glance or a thought evidently to the fact that his sister was not in evening dress. Evening dress! She wore, remodeled, the black voile dress that had been made in Poughkeepsie, still her only dress-up costume. How suspicious it had been in her to think beforehand that perhaps Francis would object to showing a plainly dressed sister to his grand friends on the Peace Commission! How mean and vengeful women's long memories are! she thought with remorse.

Francis was coming back, having found Parkinson. He presented the newcomer to his sister with a beautiful deference. "My sister, Mrs. Fort," he said, bowing as though she had been royalty, and as Mr. Parkinson (if that was the name) took her hand, Francis added proudly, "My sister and her husband have been in France in relief work *since the spring of 1915*. She has given her entire fortune to help the cause of the Allies."

Matey blinked and shut her lips together rather hard. What a vixen she was, she thought, taking offense at the least thing.

Other people came in, guests of Francis for the dinner, big, smooth-shaven men with light-colored eyes and square jaws, and, oh! such beautifully fine close-woven *new* cloth in their dress suits! Matey could not take her eyes from it. She had not seen such cloth—she had forgotten there were such fabrics, all new!

But this was nothing to the purple velvet in a dress which now approached them. Oh—why, it was Mrs. Whitlock in the dress! Impulsively she took the other woman's hand, saying warmly, "Now I can thank you, really."

Mrs. Whitlock kissed her. She seemed gratified at her warmth and looked around as if to make sure the others saw it. "I was able to be of help to this wonderful little woman," she explained (Matey towering above her), "in the matter of a military hospital she was interested in. For the whole period of the war she has given her entire life to the cause of the Allies."

Matey perceived in what light Francis and Mrs. Whitlock were presenting her. She also perceived that they were on very good terms with each other. As soon as the conversation came down from the rather soulful tone given to it by the mention of Matey's services to the cause of the Allies there was a lively interchange of pleasantries between them which took her back many years.

"Isn't it wonderful," said Mrs. Whitlock, addressing herself to Mr. Parkinson, but aware of being listened to by all the group, "my finding here in my old age these children of the dearest old friends of my youth."

"You are exactly the same, haven't changed an atom," said Francis with perfect accuracy.

She shook her sleek dark head at him. "You Gilbert men! You always know how to turn women's heads!" Looking at another man in the group, she said to Francis, "I never could make up my mind, Dr. Burchard, in the old days whether I was more in love with the father or the son."

Mr. Parkinson turned to Matey, obviously with the thought that it was time something was said to the titular guest of honor. "We're not to have the pleasure of meeting your husband this evening?"

"Oh, no," said Matey, "he's not in Paris."

"He's not one of the Peace Commission gang, then? Oh, I had an impression from something your brother said—"

Matey guessed how that impression had been obtained. In a flurry of accumulating resentment she said, with a confused notion of bringing Francis for once to book, "My husband is a lieutenant, running an ambulance section."

Mrs. Whitlock lifted her eyebrows with a startled look of one who thinks she cannot have heard aright, opened her mouth, and closed it again.

"Ah, indeed," said Mr. Parkinson, obviously trying not to sound too much like a man who knew no one under the rank of colonel.

For an instant, incredibly, Matey heard the title as they heard it and her mind made a quick futile gesture to snatch back her words. Why did she need to tell them that! Alas! Francis was not the one who had been brought to book. She was feeling apologetic—before these people!—for Adrian. She was exactly like Francis.

Mr. Parkinson stepped warily around this topic and took out another conversational gambit, "Have you been at the front lately, Mrs. Fort?" he asked politely.

"I haven't been at all," said Matey.

"Not at *all!*" cried Mrs. Whitlock. "Why, you poor child! Francis! Your sister says she hasn't been able to get to the front at *all!* We must get a permit for you at once—it'll be easy to manage some mission or other for you. Though of course now"—she added with the accent of disappointment, "I forgot about the armistice—there's really nothing to see."

"A great mistake!" burst suddenly from a thin elderly dignitary who till then had not spoken at all. "We ought not to have stopped till we had marched all through Germany, doing what they did to Belgium, clear through to Berlin. Given them a taste of their own medicine. Our boys would have seen to it that Fritz had what was coming to him. We could have trusted them to." He turned to the man nearest him and went on with his oration while Mrs. Whitlock told Matey, "I was at the front two days after Chateau-Thierry was evacuated by the Boches. The first American woman allowed there. Before any cleaning-up had been done, you know—the real thing, I can tell you! I got right down into the trenches where there'd been hand-to-hand—"

"Ah, M. Martin, quel plaisir de vous voir!" said Francis, stepping forward to greet a newcomer, bald, stout, with quick smiling lips and quiet attentive eyes.

Francis presented him to Matey, putting an extra polish on his French, delicately drawing out the *e* mutes like an actor reciting poetry. "My sister, Mme. Fort," said Francis. "My sister and her husband have been in France doing war relief work since the spring of 1915. She has expended the whole of her fortune to help the cause of the Allies."

M. Martin bowed over Matey's hand and replied in unaffected French, not in the least delicate or Parisian, but heartily, broadly southern, with amusing nasals and rolled *r*'s. Francis led him on a hand-shaking circuit of the circle.

"What wonderful French your brother speaks," murmured one of the Americans in Matey's ear. "The rest of us are as helpless as immigrants on Ellis Island. He'd be influential enough, anyhow, a man of his standing. But it's really beyond anything—the added advantage his French is to him. He'll be one of the few whose say-so will count."

Matey thought, "I wonder if he has learned to spell the endings of his past tenses," and reflected that now he would not need to, surrounded as he was by expert stenographers to do the dreary work of being correct.

"Well, we might as well go in and peck at our humble meal," said Francis, when the introductions were over. "We're all here." He bent with a fine bow and offered his arm to his sister as guest of honor. On the way into the dining-room he murmured in her ear, "Mrs. Whitlock's money was *in* steel, to begin with. How's that for luck? It's ten times what it used to be when we knew her!"

No, decidedly, Matey could not hold her own with the food. She had refused the last two dishes offered. She was sorry, she told the man on her right, solicitous for her lack of appetite, but she didn't seem to feel very hungry. Her soup, she explained, she had eaten her soup very well. "That's all we have, often, for our evening meal," she told him, refusing to put a spoon in a wonderful edifice, apparently of many-colored glass, presumably of aspic jelly. Francis heard her. "My sister," he said proudly, "has been absolutely living the wartime life of France for nearly four years. You can see by looking at her that she has not had more than her share!" With a gesture he presented Matey to them as a war exhibit, her thinness, her old remodeled dress, her plainly dressed hair, her lack of jewelry. Matey realized that far from wishing her to appear in an elegant toilette, it would have spoiled his effect. It was, she thought, the first time that Francis had ever been proud of her.

"*I* thought she looked *dreadfully* when I first saw her," said Mrs. Whitlock fondly, reaching for a bonbon. "But I must say her thinness is very becoming to her. It makes your eyes look simply *enormous,* Matey dear, and I certainly wish I had your figure."

Matey looked at her silently out of enormous eyes.

The Frenchman was eating his way methodically through the elaborate meal. He seemed to be doing his share of talking, in fact cast out a great many sparkling words. But Matey thought he gave as intent an attention as she to the talk which now rose just beyond Francis.

"Who is this M. Martin?" she asked of Mr. Parkinson, sitting next to her.

"Well, I don't know exactly. I've heard, too. Somebody or other close to Clemenceau, if I remember rightly. A kind of *officier de liaison* between the American members of the Peace Commission crowd and the French."

"—I said to him, '*Don't you worry about that!*'" announced the man beyond Francis. " 'That don't amount to a row of pins,' I told him. 'Do you suppose we pay any attention to all that? Our policy,' I told him, 'is to let the Old Man talk. He loves to. And what harm does it do? Makes a nice occupation for him. When it comes right down to what is going to be *done* he won't have a look-in. He can't! The big world's no college campus!' "

Francis nodded energetically.

Something slid gently over Matey's left shoulder. She turned to see. *More food!* She shook her head and pressed her napkin to her lips.

"Madame," said M. Martin addressing her coolly in French across two diners between them, "to whom do they make reference, in this amusing fashion, as the 'Old Man'?"

She shook her head. "Some little pleasantry of their circle, I suppose," she said.

She saw in his eyes that he understood her to be trying to evade his question and from his smile that he had extracted from what she said the information he was seeking. He complimented her effusively on her French. "And your brother too! You've no idea what a bright spot his French is among the tongue-tied

Americans of the Peace Commission. So many things will pass through his hands because of that. He will be a power, any one can see that." He looked around the table, which was in an uproar of laughter over some remark of Mrs. Whitlock's Matey had missed. *"Cette dame?"* he inquired of Matey.

"Very influential in American war relief work," she told him.

"Ah," he answered, his eyes on Mrs. Whitlock. He looked at Matey again, and said smiling, "How like one big family they all are, already, are they not, Madame? A wonderful gift for collective action, the Americans! I envy them. Nothing of the French quarrelsome individualism and lack of loyalty to a common purpose. Your people always stand solidly together behind their leaders. It is wonderful."

"It's very kind of you to say so," murmured Matey faintly.

Francis of course insisted on putting her into a cab at the door of the hotel. But as soon as she was out of sight, halfway across the Place de la Concorde, she stopped the driver and dismissed him. She could not return to the apartment yet, she could not face the eyes that would look at her there. She would walk. She could perhaps walk it off.

She had not reached the sidewalk at the edge of the Place before she began to cry. She felt her way to a bench and sat down on it, burying her face in her hands, and sobbing as she had not—not since the night of her father's death had she wept like this, as though she were being torn to pieces.

She felt a hand on her shoulder, and remembering for the first time where she was, looked up prepared to check a manifestation of the experimental, easily repelled Parisian gallantry. But it was no seeker after adventures who stood looking down on her. A gaunt old man, shabbily dressed, a refugee. Perhaps a beggar? No. He said to her, "Pardon . . . I see that Madame is in trouble. Madame is a refugee?"

"No," said Matey, and then, *"Yes!"*

"Madame, in 1914 my wife died on a bench in the street. We lived in Valenciennes. Homeless, like a dog, she died. Since then—I have work now—I make it my business to . . ." He took out of his pocket a purse and fumbled to open it.

"No, no, no, thank you," said Matey, standing up, quiet now. "No, you are very kind. But I—I don't deserve your help. I am not without shelter. I still have a home."

PART FOUR

I

THIS was all, she felt, that was left her. She wrote to Adrian almost in the words of Ziza's little boy: "Can't we go home?"

She knew before a single session of the Peace Conference had been held what the result would be. Around her the women in black still trustingly waited for President Wilson to perform a miracle. She could not go on living with them, knowing what lay in the future. She had seen it being constructed around Francis' dinner table. If she could only get home and be far away from them, as slowly, slowly these women with their vain hope came to learn what she knew now—that they had been fooled, that nothing at all would come from their sorrow except a firmer grip by the Francises of every nation on what they wanted!

"Can't we go home now, Adrian?" she wrote in every letter.

She was not the only refugee who now thought of nothing but going home. They all did. Matey knew no one, not one of all the human beings in her circle from high to low, who felt joy in the fact of "victory." Their wildness of rejoicing over the Armistice had been not of triumph but of frantic relief that the firing had stopped. The war had lasted too long. Like everything that lasts too long, it had worn out the attention of its audience. No one even talked about it any longer. They thrust it behind them and talked of nothing but how to go home.

For many of the refugees there was no home to go to. But their nostalgia did not depend on material facts. In every *œuvre* where Matey served, ungrateful refugees were refusing dumbly, stubbornly, unintelligently offers of good pay and good work in strange localities, and were doggedly moving heaven and earth to return to what was often no more than a spot on the surface of the globe. Logical-minded heads of war relief organizations were out of patience with their unreason and as far as they could were refusing to humor it. Matey helped those she knew, using up most of what was left of Aunt Connie's money. Sometimes her refugees got off for home with no more belongings than they could load on a push-cart, prepared to walk all the way, leading children by the hand, carrying the baby, camping by the roadside. If there had been no other way for Matey to go home she too would gladly have gone that way. She felt herself one with these storm-driven exiles, beating their bedraggled wings against the kind, restraining hands of those who had fed them through the tempest. Their yearning was an echo of what she felt, even in the case of those who had lost all their families, whose longing to be at home was based on no hope of reunion with the other human beings who had made their home, but only of reunion with their own corner of the sky, their own particular clod of earth.

Her longing to be at home was like theirs, not personal, as the homesickness of the earlier years of the war had been, a desire to see after long absence her sister, her dearly-loved father-in-law, the comfortable, kind neighbors and comrades. As a matter of fact she scarcely thought of them when she thought of home. Her nostalgia was like that of a lost and bewildered dog or horse, sick for a familiar smell or sound—like that of a refugee for the one spot where her pulse would again beat in unison with that of the earth and sky. It was for the feel under her hand of the familiar door-latches, for the irregularity under her feet of the well-known, broad, warped floor-boards, for the faint smell of creosote in the attic which she had always struggled to prevent, for the broad gleam of the Hudson from the windows of the children's room, for the sound of the night boat's hoarse whistle, for the myriad-leaved vitality of the beech tree, different from any other beech tree; for the blades of grass growing in her own yard, different from any other grass.

It was not surprising that refugees going home when there was no home to go to found in Madame Fort an impassioned helper. They often said apologetically, "I know it's foolish, I hear there isn't a roof left standing in our village. But—the hill is there, the hill where we—" Or the river. Or the marsh. Yes, yes, yes, Madame Fort understood. That hill was her hill; that river, that marsh, she knew them. She went down again into the corners of

Aunt Connie's purse to scrape up what was left. And she wrote again to her husband, "Adrian, can't we go home now?"

Adrian wrote back sensible reassuring letters. Yes, they were going home—and together. His application for discharge in France, favorably indorsed by his Chief of Service, had been fed into the proper official cogwheels. An order might come any day. But Matey must remember that enlisting was like declaring war—an affair of an excited five minutes. Getting out of the army was slow and deliberate like making peace. And until he was a civilian again it would be folly to think of engaging steamer passage. Matey must try to be patient.

She did try, patience being impossible, to keep occupied. As each task was finished she turned to a new one. She used up many hours helping an elderly cousin of Madame Vinet's, whose unit of the French Red Cross had been for some weeks stationed at the Gare du Nord, to take care of the French soldiers who had been prisoners in Germany during the war and were now filtering back into France. They came slowly and irregularly, because the Germans, at the limit of exhaustion and of supplies, had for the most part merely opened the gates of their prison-camps and let the inmates make their way as best they could to the French frontiers. Thence they were being brought by French trains to Paris, where at the Gare du Nord doctors, nurses, and Red Cross workers met them with hot food, clothing, medical care, bandages, and helped them find their way either to their friends or to hospitals or sanatoria. "We hear," said Mme. Vinet's old cousin, coming one afternoon, "that a trainload of men on stretchers who had been in prison hospitals are coming in tonight, and I thought if any one of you here were free you might help us out. Your part would be nothing more than making and serving coffee and washing dishes."

By this time the phrase "men on stretchers," which four years ago would have been neutral to Matey, was steeped in lurid colors. "We don't want to call in any of our younger helpers," said the old cousin, "only women we can depend on."

Matey said, "I'm the only one here who can get off tonight. Ziza's worried over a bronchial cold of little Adrien's, and Mme. Vinet's bad knee is so lame she can scarcely stand on it a moment." Little Adrien, though cheerful and playful as the other children, seemed to have no physical resistance in him. A cold which with Petella and Brother would have meant hot lemonade at bedtime and plenty of handkerchiefs for a few days, meant for the little boy from Louvain a high temperature, a beginning of lung congestion, and long days of slow convalescence. As for Mme. Vinet's knee, it was a euphemism to call it lame. The war had grimly hastened the process of aging. People went into it middle-aged and came out decrepit.

But Matey was perfectly strong. Except for one devastating struggle with nervous indigestion, when the fate of the children in the Convalescent Home at Hendaye had hung in the balance, she had never faltered physically since her landing in France. The body toughened and strengthened in play so long ago had served her steadily without complaint. So after Petella and Brother were in bed and had had their going-to-sleep chapter of *Sans Famille* read to them, Matey rolled up one of her well-worn, long sleeved, long-skirted aprons, put on a warm wrap, for it was a cold January night, and set out. Once inside the smoky big station she soon located the Red Cross unit, behind a counter, and was at once installed in her place in front of an improvised sink, where she began to wash thick earthenware cups. She was thankful for the task. For, although the expected trainload of sick men was not yet in, the station was full of returned prisoners left from earlier convoys. On her way to the Red Cross counter Matey had seen nothing, it seemed to her, but gaunt, listless, unshaven men, dirty bird-claw hands, stooping skeleton frames draped around with rags too worn and drab to guess whether they had ever been uniforms. Her passage among them stirred up gusts of a stale, sour, moldering odor compared to which the acrid smell of the hot dishwater was delicious. They came and went from the Red Cross counter to get coffee and bread. If she turned her head away from the steaming pan before her she could see nothing but gray faces and hollow eyes, passing like a procession of unburied corpses.

The wooden counter below them and the empty dusk of the high-ceilinged station above made them look like a frieze of misery painted palely on the night by sickness and war. Matey looked away from them, looked down at her dishwater. Had there not been, somewhere, in another life, another frieze, with trees above and blessed grass below, where little children played with dogs, and great hay wagons were drawn by strong, well-fed horses? It was like something she had read, no more.

"That must be the train coming in now," said Mme. Vinet's old cousin, tipping her head toward the train-shed. Yes, a train was arriving, not as trains usually do, with a triumphant whistle and a lusty sound of whirring wheels, but creeping in over the rails with a horrid caution. Matey welcomed a new tray of stained coffee-cups to be washed, and plunged her hands deeper into the dishwater. She did not look up when heavy irregular steps began to go by, the steps which meant men carrying stretchers.

"Oh, oh, *les pauvres, les pauvres!*" whispered her old companion, under her breath, starting and beginning to cry.

No, no, Matey would not look. She had had all she could stand. "I want to go *home!*" she said childishly to herself, rinsing the cups with boiling water.

But it was never any use trying to go back and be childish when you were grown up. When the call came to serve the coffee, and some one held before Matey a tray of steaming cups, of course she took it and followed where she was led, out beyond the counter and the safety of the menial work behind it.

The stretchers had been set down in a gray windowless high-ceilinged stone room that had been used as a baggage storehouse. Over them hovered groups of army doctors, nurses in the French Red Cross uniform, and, of course, even here, officials occupied in the inevitable accompaniment of each step of the war, mean or tragic, the accumulating of reports.

"Here for coffee!" said a doctor, holding up his finger to Matey as though she were a waitress in a restaurant. The ragged, ashen man on that stretcher had no arms, so that the nurse, taking the cup from Matey's tray, held it to his lips as he drank from it, between answering questions. The doctor ran his hand and his eyes here and there under the dirty stained bandages and rags, wrote down medical details of his physical condition, and handed the slip to the *paperasserie* official, who asked the questions about his civic condition, name, residence in France, number of his regiment, where he was wounded. When those answers were noted the little group turned to the next stretcher. The doctor said to Matey, "Just follow after us with that coffee, will you?"

The occupant of the next stretcher was catalogued while Matey stood by, holding her tray and trying not to look at the sick man's struggles to answer, with most of his jawbone gone. They moved to the next stretcher. And the one after that. The thin white voices of the crippled men could scarcely be heard over the careless footsteps of the travelers walking up and down the station platform outside. That prison odor of long-ago soured dirt and sweat and pus was stifling.

Most of the men answered the questions with a docile, unsurprised patience, but some of them as they tried to tell their names and their homes wept feebly. A few, crazed and brutalized by suffering, cursed the questioners and spattered the attending women with foul words. On three of the stretchers lay broken bodies, still alive, but with their humanity dead, the dirty, deeply lined, scrubby-bearded men's faces without even an animal expression, the eyes open on vacancy.

Holding her tray like a servant, Matey tried vainly to remember that there was anything else in human life. Had she not had a home once where on quiet winter evenings the sea-coal fire had dozed in the grate, where on August afternoons the locusts had sung the old trees to sleep? Had she not been one of a harmless friendly group of whole human beings who sat under brooding old trees, waiting for their turn at tennis, keeping an eye on safe and well-fed babies?

Moments came when she felt faint and wavered on her feet. Others when her resentment at what she saw was like fire burning her up. These men had been beaten and broken and made ignominious so that Mrs. Whitlock's fortune might be trebled. And they were being welcomed back into human existence with a cup of coffee and questions, while almost within reach of their feeble voices, people sat before flower-decked tables, eating delicate food and talking of the thrill of going down into a trench before the dead were buried.

The doctor, unwrapping a filthy bandage to look at a wound, loosened a wave of gangrene-corrupted air. Mingled infernally with it for Matey was the remembered aroma of endlessly offered dishes of exquisite food, deferentially slipped over her left shoulder.

She propped her tray on her hip, holding it with one hand for a moment while she pressed the other hand on her mouth, feeling her body begin to quiver in the onset of nausea. Why, she would be incapable even of her poor share of this poor welcome if she could not for a moment bring *something* else to mind—where were her husband, her children, her home, that she could not pull them up between her and the hideousness of what men made of life?

When she could not by any effort of the will bring them before her she tried to make her mind empty and receptive, hoping they might come into it then. But what came into its emptiness was a little dog, trotting faithfully toward her across all those years. At the call of her need, little Sumner had jumped up from his grave and made his way to her through that foreign crowd in that dismal place. He stood by her now, wagging the stump of his tail a little, looking up at her deeply out of brown steady eyes.

"Coffee here," said the doctor. She stepped forward with her tray, prompt, quiet, to a man who had but half his face.

His answers came in halting murmurs. "Vincent Plantard. From La Fère. Wounded and taken prisoner in December, 1917. In the Holmholtzen prison ever since."

"This ulcer on your leg since 1917?" asked the doctor.

"Yes, came when the leg was amputated."

"Tuberculosis of the bone," diagnosed the doctor to the nurse as they moved on. "Better be sent to the sanitarium in the Landes."

"Henri LeDéan. Louvain. Wounded in . . ."

From Louvain? Matey looked down at his face, sunken and feeble under its masculine masquerade of obstinately growing beard. His body seemed no more than a collection of bones, great, knobbed Flemish bones. She wondered if any chance had ever thrown him in the way of Ziza's husband. They had so long questioned any one from Louvain—

When the doctor's catechism was ended, "Pardon, Monsieur le Docteur," said the waitress with the tray. "May I put one question?"

To the man on the stretcher she said, very gently, ashamed to ask him to think of anything but his own suffering, "You didn't happen to serve in the same regiment with another man from Louvain, killed in 1914, in the defense of Liège . . . Adrien Conacq?"

"He wasn't killed," said Henri LeDéan. "He's here in this convoy somewhere."

Matey paused an instant, irresolute and breathless, at the bottom of those long stairs up to the apartment. She was still in her apron, no hat, no wrap, just as she had run out of the Gare du Nord. She had thought of nothing but how to reach Ziza most quickly. But now, her imagination already at the top of the stairs up which her feet were slowly plodding, now she could not think of any way to tell her. How could you tell news that was at once so awful and so blessed? How to let Ziza learn, as she had learned, in the same breath, that Adrien was not dead, and yet was only half alive?

As she tapped on the door of the apartment she heard Ziza with her quick step come down the hall, advancing unconsciously toward the terrific news which lay on the tip of Matey's tongue. The sound sent every word out of Matey's mind. When Ziza opened the door she could only stand there on the landing, silently confronting her. "Oh, it's you, Mété," said Ziza in her ordinary voice. And then, after one look at Matey's face, "Mété?" she said, on a higher note, hardly a word, like the sudden inner shock of an emotion.

With one of her quick fierce gestures she pulled Matey in under the light of the gas-jet in the hall and looked burningly into her eyes. *"What is it, Mété?"*

"Ziza . . . *chérie* . . ." began Matey unsteadily. "Among the *grands blessés* . . ." She said no more. Ziza flung her arms up with a frantic gesture of abandon and screamed. A long, magnificent, primitive cry, beautiful and terrifying—a passionate heart finding its own language for the unutterable.

When Mme. Vinet came hobbling out of her door she found Matey alone. Ziza had winged her way down the stairs on the last of that cry, still echoing grandly in the air. Matey, hatless, in her apron, leaned against the wall, her hands over her face.

"But he is so frightfully crippled, such an utter wreck," she told Mme. Vinet at the end of her story. "I should have given her some warning of that. It will be a terrible shock to her. His arm and leg on the right side both gone, and he is paralyzed from the waist down. I should have told her first of all that—but I never dreamed she would—she seemed to read it from my very look. I hadn't time to think. When the man from Louvain told me I couldn't believe it. I was sure there was a mistake. And when I went to see I never would have guessed that it was Ziza's husband. You know how bulky he was. He is like a shadow of a man shrunk up to a skeleton." She began to laugh and sob hysterically. "I remember—I remember I used to wish he—weren't so opaque."

"Did you tell him Ziza is alive?" asked Mme. Vinet.

"I asked the doctor whether I would better, and he said yes, better let him have it by degrees like that. He had heard of her death from a man taken prisoner later than he, who was an eyewitness of the massacre . . . a man who had seen Ziza fall with the others, and the children with her."

Ziza's mother and Matey looked at each other with a sick expression. Ziza had never told them any more about how she had escaped. Perhaps that was where her baby died. Perhaps little Adrien—

"He has been at death's door all the time. *Four years.* Three amputations on the wounded leg—gangrene. *In a prison hospital.* It's incredible that he is still alive. He is only alive in name, so weak. . . . He couldn't turn his head on the pillow to look at me. He couldn't put his one hand up to hide the tears that began to run out of his eyes when I spoke Ziza's name. And when I told him she is alive, here, close at hand . . ." Matey put up her own hands to hide her tears.

"We must get Henri's room ready for him," said Mme. Vinet, wiping her eyes resolutely, and getting up, her lame knee wrenching a groan from her. Matey too felt the wartime guilt at allowing herself the luxury of emotion without work.

As she reached up to a shelf to take down clean sheets Mme. Vinet said to Matey, "Don't worry about not preparing Ziza for finding him crippled and half dead with gangrene; maybe—probably she will not even notice it."

2

And now Ziza was the one who wanted to go home. At once! At once! She could not wait to have Adrien in his own bed, in his own house, which still, she had learned, stood upright, although stripped of every belonging. He would get better there, she knew. The air of Louvain was the right air for any Conacq. "And of course little Adrien must grow up in Louvain, too," she said heatedly to Matey, though nobody had dreamed of making any opposition to her plans. Matey noticed that at the very thought of opposition or even of delay Ziza's tongue once more ran a red tip hurriedly around over her lips, in her old gesture of exasperation.

The question of what they were to live on was a barrier to her plans which Ziza tore down with teeth and talons and cast away behind her. "I have just got myself a position at the bank where Adrien worked," she said, coming in one afternoon, looking heated and triumphant. "I've been to the branch here; I had heard they were letting war widows take their husbands' places. How much more somebody in my position?" Matey thought, looking at her, that it was not surprising she had secured work—or anything else she had asked for.

That afternoon when the children came home from school and heard the news, "Oh, we are going *home!*" cried little Adrien. He got down on his knees and clasped his arms around his dog's neck, murmuring something in his ear. "Can you remember home, Brother?" asked Petella. "When you come in the front door, which way is the dining-room? Which one of the trees is your tree?"

Brother said dreamily, "We kept the kiddie-car in the closet under the stairs."

But Ziza's position at the bank was a tiny one, it turned out in later talk, ill paid, with long hours. "Never mind!" said Ziza. "We can manage. Adrien will have some pension, I suppose. Not enough, but something. And Maman—oh, Mété, have I told you that Maman is coming with us? She can give music lessons as well in Louvain as here. She can't go on living here alone. And you can think if she'd be happy with Mimi now. By putting our earnings together we'll have enough. And Maman's work being always at home, you see, she can keep an eye on things while I am at the bank."

Matey did see. So Mme. Vinet was going to give up her own home to help Ziza keep hers. Matey had not thought of that solution. "The things in the apartment here will just furnish our house, too," said Ziza. "What else could Maman do with them?"

That evening when Ziza was in her husband's sick room and the children were in bed and Dominiqua laboriously writing a letter to Jean on the kitchen table, Matey spoke about this to Mme. Vinet. "Won't it be hard for you to leave—to leave all that you *will* leave behind you?" She thought of her own sick longing to be home. She thought of what this older home meant, the lifetime accumulation of memories, all the old friends, the old habits, the old occupations, all that had been part of the past.

Mme. Vinet began matter-of-factly, "Oh, Ziza needs me far more than I need—" But to her surprise she could not go on, and showed to Matey a face piteously stripped of its usual quiet. Her lips moved in a soundless apology for her weakness. But Matey understood. It did not seem strange to her that the older woman could stand up to the loss of a son, to the loss of another, could be wise with selfless wisdom, and still be moved at the prospect of being homeless. Here was one refugee who was never going home. She put her arms silently around her old friend. Mme. Vinet leaned her head against Matey's shoulder and drew a few long breaths. Then she murmured, "The good you do is like music, Mété; no words, just your being there." And, lifting her head, "Mété, you asked me once from where I draw my strength? Where does yours come from?"

"Have I any?" asked Matey in surprise.

An irrepressible laugh broke from Mme. Vinet's lips. She kissed Matey's cheeks and said as if this were an answer, "No one—no one in all the world has such honest eyes as my Mété."

Ziza came walking in noiselessly, her eyes shining. "He held his cup for a moment—himself! Without help!"

They were all packing to go home. All but Mme. Vinet. Mimi came up to Paris to talk over plans, this time with her husband, for the older men in the "territorial service" were already demobilized.

All of them looked older, of course, Matey thought, gazing at the bald, white-bearded old man beside Mimi, but really M. Bouvard the most of all. "Old and tired and absolutely through," she described him in her letter to Adrian that night. No talk from him, as constantly from Mimi, about getting the factory ready to meet the demand for plumbing-fixtures sure to come with the rebuilding of ruined cities; no questions about tariffs and raw materials. No. "Emilie has done very well at that, let her go on with it," he said with the cynical placidity of complete indifference. "We'd quarrel if I tried to go back. And in any case all I want to do is to make things with my jigsaw in winter and go fishing in summer. I never yet had time enough for those two occupations."

Of the transformation in Mimi's spiritual life, cataclysmic to her family, he remarked in exactly the same tone, to her mother. "Hasn't Emilie got awfully pious all of a sudden? Have you noticed it? I never thought before she had any tendencies toward devoutness." He dismissed the matter with a shrug and another sip of his liqueur. "Oh, well, it takes some women that way." Matey did not know whether he meant that what "took some women" was the war or life. He went on to Mme. Vinet with a comfortable smile. "As long as she doesn't try to make *me* go to Mass! I did enough of that when I was a boy."

Here was some one who accepted Mimi's conversion as Matey had wished Mme. Vinet would, easily, tolerantly. But when she saw this attitude embodied in the flesh she detested it. She realized now that she had never understood anything of all this story of Mimi and her mother's reaction to her Catholicism. It had found nothing in her own life or experience with which to combine to create understanding. It was not true that all experience made you wiser. Here was raw material of life which she had not been able to fashion into shape.

After the Bouvards had gone Ziza said, "I told you, Mété, René wouldn't have a chair in the office."

"He doesn't want one," said Mme. Vinet, defending her older daughter.

Ziza said with a short laugh, "It's well for him he doesn't," and went off to her husband's sick bed.

He was imperceptibly better, though still too weak to see any one but Ziza and the doctor. But day by day Ziza, coming out of the sick room even more glowingly vital than when she went in, reported those minute grounds for hope which mean so much to impassioned nurses. She was tireless, patient, indomitable, fulfilled. When the doctor told her, "He will never be out of a wheeled chair," she cried, "*Oh,* will he be well enough to be in a wheeled chair?" She saw herself dressing him, pushing his chair out under the open sky, under their own trees; she saw herself running to and fro all the rest of her life in the endless care of a cripple. She startled the doctor by kissing him violently on both cheeks.

Mme. Vinet, rather shut out from both daughters just now, was very close to Matey in those hurried uncomfortable days of packing and planning which were for her the last days of home. Dominiqua stayed on in Paris with the family to the end, though she was as desperately homesick for her own country as any of them. One evening the three of them were in the kitchen, wrapping china and glass in newspaper and putting it into barrels. Dominiqua said, out of a silence, "The *genêt* will be in bloom at Biriatou in a few weeks." She tucked in the ends of paper about the dish she held and added, "I don't suppose you remember, M'ame Mété—you were such a little thing—how the *genêt* looks when it is all yellow with blossoms."

But, yes, M'ame Mété remembered very well how the *genêt* looked, dark and rough and prickly when you were down in it, with only a few blossoms here and there, and all one smooth golden carpet when you looked at it from afar.

The Basque and the American both looked at it in imagination silently as they worked, stooping their backs over the barrel.

Presently they ran out of newspaper—there was a scarcity of paper as of everything else in France. Dominiqua said she would run down and ask the *concierge* if she had any. Matey settled herself on a packing-box and put her hand over her mouth to stifle a tired yawn. She was working three nights a week in the Gare du Nord Red Cross canteen and never had enough sleep. Mme. Vinet, noticing a leaking faucet letting fall a slow drop-drop of water in the sink, tried to turn it off. But French faucets of that period, like other things, were worn out by long service without repairs, and all she could accomplish was to make a slightly longer interval between the falling drops. Turning her back on it, she leaned against the sink, looked thoughtfully at Matey, and said, evidently going on with what had been in her mind while the talk ran on blossoming broom, "Do you know, perhaps Ziza will be happier with her husband—this way."

Matey looked at her quickly to see whether there was in her face the note of blame or irony which was conspicuously absent from her voice. Matey too had thought of this, had remembered a certain hillside, where, near a hawthorn bush full of swollen buds and chittering small birds, Ziza had said, "He never would change. And I couldn't." The thought had seemed to her a savage criticism of Ziza.

But there was neither irony nor blame on Mme. Vinet's thoughtful face, withered and elderly now. There was nothing but the clarity of her realistic sight of things as they are. In its very different and Gallic setting this sometimes reminded Matey of her father-in-law's honesty, which she had often found unsparing and bald.

Over Mme. Vinet's shoulder gazed the long, watchful face of

President Wilson from a lithograph which Dominiqua had pinned up beside Our Lady of Lourdes. Sitting there on the edge of a packing-box in the small stuffy old European kitchen, with its old European smell of drains and garlic and dishwater, looking up at Mme. Vinet and the lithographed face behind her, Matey thought once more with a pang how strange it was that Mme. Vinet, so invincibly realistic about everything else, who never for a moment had lost her lifetime liberalism in any nationalistic hysteria, should harbor the naïveté of this wild faith in the American President. And not only Mme. Vinet, who had, after all, always shared her husband's political creed—the multitude of home-keeping women who never before had perceived the deadly closeness of the link which binds them and their personal affections to the impersonal problems of the rulers of governments.

"What do you hear from your brother, Mété?" asked Mme. Vinet casually. She always asked after Francis with French punctiliousness about blood kindred.

Francis, with a group of other prominent men attached to the American Peace Conference Commission, was as guest of the French Government making a tour of the front, which had been prolonged into Italy. His letters, intended for the Pittsburgh papers after they had gone the rounds of the family, were full of appreciation of the attentions paid the visiting Americans by their French and Italian hosts and of indignation over the activities of certain defeatists who wanted food sent into Germany for the women and children. "Let such snivelers see what I have seen," wrote Francis, "and they'd say as I do, 'Let Germany rot!' How much did the Boches think of French and Belgian women and children? It is their turn now. The fewer of that brood the better."

"Francis is having a very interesting experience," Matey answered Mme. Vinet, and asked, thinking of the phrase "The fewer of that brood the better," "Will Ziza and her husband keep the little Mélanie now?"

"What else would they do?" asked Mme. Vinet in surprise, and then, "Oh, you mean that the child's mother's family would want her? But they were Chauny people. Not a trace of them left after 1917. And Ziza never knew anything more about the child's father than his name. Friedrich Müller. Like Jean Duval in France. It would be impossible to trace his people."

"I see," said Matey.

"Mélanie takes the place of the poor little baby boy who—

who died," said Mme. Vinet. "Ziza can never have another child of her own. Little Mélanie really seems like her own now."

"I see," said Matey again. She had no intention of saying anything more. But without her will her secret foreboding spurted out in rough words that sounded like blame. She said brusquely, "Mme. Vinet, it's not *fair,* truly it's not, to expect so much of President Wilson. It doesn't seem like you. What could he do if he were a demigod, and he's not in the least! I used to hear faculty talk about him years ago when he was a college president . . . he's *full* of flaws. I can't endure it to have you expecting . . ."

For an instant Mme. Vinet was startled. Then she broke in, "I know what you mean, Mété. I've seen too that the older diplomats hate him. Already the tone of our newspapers is changing, is hostile, belittling to him. But you Americans are invincibly strong now. When you speak as a united nation, the world must listen."

"Perhaps we won't speak as a united nation," Matey suggested faintly, hanging her head.

Mme. Vinet said sharply, "Ah!" on an indrawn breath and was silent. Matey sat looking down at her shoes and listening to the water dripping slowly into the sink. But when at last Mme. Vinet spoke her voice was not even sad. "Ah, well, Mété dear—even so . . . even so . . . You're young and an American. You forget that time, much time, is as necessary as air for any growth. I'm an old woman from a patient old race that has lived too long to expect very much—to expect *anything* good to happen quickly."

She was silent. The drop-drop-drop made audible the passage of the minutes. Then she said, nodding her head, "Yes, yes, I see. It is natural that the materialists should be in power in America too. They generally are in power everywhere. And they always hate anybody who pretends that people could be better off than they are. Your President may go down to complete failure at the Peace Conference. All those in power want him to fail and will find a way to make him fail. But what of it? Did you ever hear of a man with a noble idea who succeeded in his own lifetime?"

"But . . ." said Matey, "but . . ." She felt quite bewildered. Her mind went back to the wild scenes of Wilson's arrival, Mme. Vinet weeping and cheering and waving her handkerchief. Mme. Vinet too, evidently remembered, for her face took on again the expression of exaltation which so distressed Matey. She said earnestly, "What he is doing—this faulty human being—is sowing a seed that no European in power would dream of sowing. Or is it America through him that is sowing it? Perhaps he himself hardly knows what he is doing. Perhaps all our misery and shame finds him the only outlet through which it can drive a way out to the light. Don't be discouraged. It was childish to dream of success at once. He has only stated the theme. To develop it will take your grandchildren and mine—"

But Matey was no longer listening. She was repeating to herself with a long breath of liberation, "It is not a blow he is striking. It is a seed he is planting. A seed is something that has life in it."

3

THEY were embarked. Incredibly they seemed to be going home. All about them people lay in steamer chairs on the second-class deck or walked up and down, played shuffleboard, or flirted. Petella and Brother ran around investigating shipboard possibilities for fun and practicing their English. Brother's lingo was an uproarious success. He still could understand not a word of English when spoken to him, but he was beginning to mix odds and ends of it with his French. "Zis *matin* I 'av too many water *dans mon bassin,* and she run down *sur le parquet,*" he explained, waving his hands to dramatize the contents of wash-basin slopping over.

Knowing that Petella would always take care of Brother wherever they were, Matey lay on her steamer chair beside Adrian's in an abandon of bodily fatigue. Her mental fatigue had not yet reached the point of abandon. As soon as she shut her eyes and tried to relax, images and memories and cares swarmed about her. At first she lived over again inconsecutively those last hurried days in Paris. They had been, as a matter of actual fact, the first ones after Adrian's discharge from the army and so should have been momentous. But they had been crammed with the incredibly trivial, incredibly important details of helping the Vinets get off, and then of settling the equally complicated mechanism of their own departure. They had felt the emotional color of those last days in France as little as a man running to catch a train notices a sunset flaming about him.

For days Matey's brain refused to take in the fact that they were on the ship going home. Sometimes her body gave a great twitching surge. Oh, some lunch must be put up for Dominiqua to eat on the train! Or, there! she had not given Mme. Vinet the key to that square trunk! The lunch eaten days before on the train to Biriatou, the key of the trunk now unlocked and unpacked in Louvain. In his deck chair beside her, Adrian did not stir. Limp and still he lay in his faded trench coat. His cap pulled low over his eyes, his collar turned up high, he smoked or dozed for hours, nothing showing of himself but a noncommittal sandy mustache, which had now some white hairs in it. When she asked him a question he answered it and at once dropped back to complete silent immobility—the very picture of a tired man resting.

Packed together with the children in a tiny inside four-berth cabin, with no place more private for talk than the crowded salons or decks, they had as yet, Matey thought, not really begun again their life in common. She felt no disappointment that there was so little drama about their being together again. For one thing she was too tired. For another she and Adrian seemed to be now indissolubly two halves of one whole. It was only natural—not dramatic—their being together. As soon as they emerged from this paralysis of fatigue they would once more merge their inner lives—she took this for granted.

As the gray days of a sunless passage slid hour after hour between Matey and those trivial immediate cares, other cares and memories, not so recent, not so trivial, began to toss to and fro in her head. She tried hard to stay there in her steamer chair, her eyes on the gray sky over the gray sea, but all at once she would not be at this dubious end of the war, but still in the midst of it, coming down the walk from Mimi's house, a frightened little boy clutching at each of her hands, hearing behind her Mimi's high-pitched vehement voice. Now President Wilson's leathery cheeks, creased in a pleased smile, hung before her, replaced by Ziza's face as she asked, deathly pale, "What is it, Mété?" Now for the last time Mme. Vinet walked down those familiar stairs, talking cheerfully to little Mélanie . . . while all the time Matey was aware as it were of an eagle's wing beating there beside her. She dreaded most what came most often, the night at the Gare du Nord.

People about them started the customary steamer small talk, compared notes on impressions of France, asked the children's ages. Matey brought out the right answers and sometimes held conversations of considerable length with these casual companions, whom she liked for their simplicity and lack of pretense and for the devotion with which they had been doing anonymous hard work. But afterward she could scarcely remember what had been said. One conversation, however, she did not forget. A small wren-like, honest-faced woman, a stenographer by profession, who had been private secretary to a high official of the American Red Cross, stopped one day to lean on the rail near by. Matey heard her saying to the woman with her, "Well, I was sorry for him lots of times. It didn't seem to make any difference *what* they did, nobody was satisfied. Knock! knock! knock! That's all the American Red Cross ever got from anybody. Nobody made any allowances. Everybody seemed to think the people running the show made mistakes on purpose. Nobody ever stopped to think what *they* were up against. They got the boss's nerve just *busted*. He'd hate to make a decision one way or the other about anything, because he knew the Red Cross would get it in the neck no matter what! I've seen him, many's the time . . ." The couple moved off, and Matey heard no more.

After they were gone she turned to Adrian. "That makes me ashamed of the way I felt over the Hendaye home. I suppose it was the same in all the war relief organizations. I never thought of their side."

Adrian looked at her absently. "Oh, well," he said, "we've all got so much to be ashamed of it's no use trying to balance the books. Better call the whole thing profit and loss and forget about it."

Matey was nettled. He evidently hadn't had the faintest idea how much that miserable incident had meant to her. Should she try to explain . . . but just then Petella bounded up, exclaiming, "*Mother!* I was coming up to tell you it's time for *déjeuner* and I almost *dégringoléd* off the *escalier*." They went to lunch, and the moment for finding out what had been in Adrian's mind passed.

He was not his usual self. She was sure of that. But neither was she. Not only did she waken every morning, sunk a little more deeply in all-enveloping depression; not a single night could she get herself safely into sleep without jerking up at least once out of her first doze, heart pounding, nerves twitching, feet and hands icy cold with consternation over some past catastrophe or over one merely dreaded, that had never happened at all. Some night as with a great bound she sat up suddenly in the dark, it was to look again into Ziza's face as her lips formed the word, "Gas?" Sometimes the cabin reeked with the smell of gangrenous flesh, and she was again standing beside the stretcher of a man who wept over the effort of trying to remember who he had been. Was she awake or was it in sleep that she struggled to turn her eyes away from a long fascinated stare at the rotting Germans in the ruined house? There they stood in the dark, saying to her something they had called out silently when she had first looked into their dead eyes. It was something Adrian had told her on his first furlough home, when he had said he would not have his wife forget that war meant killing as well as being killed. But she had not listened. She had kept herself too busy to hear. Their voices had been like puffs of white from a distant cannon. The sound had had long to travel before in mid-ocean silence it roared sullenly in her ears, telling her from those long dead men, "We were killed by those tired, kind, homeless men to whom you devoted yourself. You helped our murderers take our lives."

Unprotected now by the clatter of material busyness, Matey began after four years of living in the midst of it—to look at war. She had drugged herself to unconsciousness of what they were all doing by the traditional woman's narcotic of small personal services. She had assumed to the fighting men she knew the domestic relation of sister and mother and so had seen them, as sisters always see their brothers and mothers their sons, as victims, never as the butchers they punctually took their turn at being. On some nights as she lay in these waking trances, she could feel the fumes of her narcotic clearing away from her brain and suffered the frightening pain which comes to drug addicts with the return to reality.

Daylight always brought relief. Morning after morning, as she looked haggardly over the edge of her berth at the children's rosy faces, she thought, "What nightmares I am having on this trip!"

One of the most troubling of those nightmares—if they were nightmares—was the fear that she had lost their food cards. Like all women with dependents she had been overwhelmed with the responsibility for those priceless, irreplaceable bits of perforated cardboard, far more important than mere money, only to be secured once, and then by slow freezing in a waiting line. Without them neither bread nor sugar nor flour nor—above all—any kind of fuel could be obtained. They never left her. Twenty times a day she felt in her bag for them, and at night she put the large envelope containing them under her pillow. Every time she waked she slipped a hand under her head to make sure it was there. Making this instinctive gesture on shipboard in her berth and finding nothing always flung her into a panic before she could get her wits together.

Once this nightmare was so vivid that Matey, still half asleep, got out of her berth and began to feel about in the darkness. Groping hurriedly everywhere, she reached up into Adrian's berth to make sure she had not laid the big envelope there. The tips of her fingers trailed across his bare arm lying on the blanket.

"Yes?" he said in the collected tone of one who has been long awake. "What's the matter?"

The quality of his voice awoke her with a shock. "Nothing," she murmured. "I must have been having a bad dream—I thought I'd lost the food cards. . . ."

He pulled her near so that her ear was close to his lips. "Put that all behind you, Matey," he whispered. "Forget it. That's the only way to stay sane. Forget it!"

He dropped her hand. There was no sound but the throb-throb-throb of the engine's pulse and an occasional creak of boards as the ship lifted and sank to the waves.

His voice had been no more than awake and intent. But the echo it left in this silence was of mortal sadness.

She got back into her berth, narrow as a coffin. The words were nothing. The Adrian she thought she knew might have said them —but not with that undertone of desperation. Somewhere—years ago—whose was that other hopeless voice which now again after years of silence echoed back his counsel of despair? "Keep busy! That's the only thing to do—keep busy!"

It was not of food cards that Matey was thinking as she lay awake in the dark, feeling the throb of the ship's engines thrusting her forward to an unknown destination.

The children evidently noticed nothing unusual about their father. But they had seen very little of him in the last four years

—a few short furloughs—and here on shipboard he still provided all they had learned to ask of him—knees to climb on, stories at bedtime, an umpire in disputes, an answer to questions. And there were plenty of times when Matey told herself that there *was* nothing unusual about him. Outwardly he was normal enough. He gave coherent to-be-expected replies to everything she said, his nightly kiss before they lay down in their narrow beds was tender enough. It must be that he was only tired and war-worn as she was—but it would not do. Even as her mind framed these comforting explanations, all her heart was trembling in the fear that the old Adrian-like sharing openness was gone. Wasn't it only on the surface he was meeting her? Wasn't he, in everything that mattered, holding aloof? And now she began to be afraid not of the past but of the future. For the first time . . . why, since the sunset hour on the cliffs overlooking the Hudson, when Adrian had looked at her with love . . . she guessed what it would mean to face the world alone. She perceived as never before the condition on which she had accepted life. "Not without Adrian!" she cried defiantly.

The last day of the passage had been a slow fumble through a fog which had grown steadily thicker and whiter. Arriving in the lower bay they were brought to a standstill by it, and all hope of landing that night was given up.

The power of the great engines, the trained intelligence of the officers, availed nothing against the bland impalpable wall of mist. It nullified power and intelligence not by more power and more intelligence, not by violence or opposition, but passively, by making it impossible to know which way to go. The baffled ship, which had fought its way through storms and found a path across the featureless mystery of mid-ocean, admitted defeat, dropped anchor within hearing of its goal, and waited for the only thing that was left to hope for, the dawning of another day.

Late that evening Matey and her husband leaned over the rail. "Not without Adrian!" she said to the future, and began to speak. But though she used the plainest and quickest words she had not quite strength enough to finish. "Adrian dear, I wish you'd let me—not keep so to yourself what is—" She could find no more words. She threw all her frightened loneliness into one beseeching look.

His eyes met hers, then turned to stare again at the treacherous, yielding, impenetrable fog. But it was enough for the familiar miracle, the old transparent revelation of a personality in one look. Matey knew that after all these years she had once more forgotten what Adrian was. She had seen in that one dip into the honesty of his eyes that he had never dreamed he was not sharing with her all along. What he said next was palpably addressed to one who needed no explanation, only a reminder of something held in common. "Oh, the same old thing, Matey. I'd have talked about it fast enough if I thought I'd get anywhere. That's the trouble, I don't get anywhere—except round and round. Probably there isn't any answer. At least none we're willing to accept. I keep wondering if we're ever going to find any basis for going ahead. What have we got left to base anything on? I don't know. Do you?"

"I don't even understand exactly what you're talking about," said Matey, "except that it's about the war. I can't keep my thoughts away from that, either. But, Adrian dear—what you told me the other night—that it's all over now. Why not forget it till we have a little rest? We're both so tired now."

"I'm not tired, physically. You women worked harder and harder right up to the last minute. But the Armistice stopped men's work. Beyond signing a few routine papers and hauling a few sick and peasants and keeping my boys out of trouble with the M.P.'s I haven't had a thing to do for months but think. First chance for that I've had since—" He paused, leaning heavily on the railing, facing the fog.

As if realizing that his thoughts had sunk below audibility, he shook his shoulders a little and went on, "Well, when you come down to thinking, is there anything left to think about except that not one of our standards of decency could hold out a minute after the tom-toms got to beating? I might stand our shucking off our civilization and grabbing our stone axes—everybody gets forced into doing things he hates. What gets me is that we all liked it."

"No, Adrian, *no!*" Matey broke in. "It's bad enough without making it worse than it was. Not a man of all those I saw from the French army but loathed war. You ought to have heard them talk!"

He broke in impatiently, "Oh, I heard them talk, all right. I talked, too. We all said we hated it. So we did, with our brains. But how much did our brains amount to in the sum total of what we all turned out to be? You say those men loathed war—don't you remember the expression of their eyes when they bragged about their regiments? They were proud of what the war gave them. That Basque fellow, Dominiqua's son, he's a born soldier. Didn't you hear his voice the day he told us about their getting the *fourragère* after they'd stopped the drive on Compiègne? No, they all of them enjoyed it—for different reasons. It appeals to a lot of things—not only the wild beast in us, but the sporting instinct—it was a real betting interest we took, to see how far an offensive would get before it was stopped. And the natural-born serfs, couldn't you *feel* how relieved they were to give up trying to run their own lives and have an officer tell them what to do? When I say 'they' I don't mean I was different. Not since I was a kid have I enjoyed baseball so much as some games I played in just back of the lines. And what was I thinking about here just before you began to talk? You probably thought I was lost in remorse about the war. Well, I was remembering how happy and proud I felt one night—it must have been December or late November, for it was freezing—when the wounded began to be brought in and told us that the French held Douaumont again. All of a glow I was, the 'pleasure of recollection' collecting, like amber round a bug, around the satisfaction I'd felt that night in thinking that maybe enough Germans had been killed to stop them for a while."

Matey had been stricken into silence long ago. She listened painfully, trying to get her bearings. Adrian seemed to turn a number of memories over in his mind before he went on. "I'm not blaming anybody, Matey, not anybody at all, because everybody was the same way. If that's the way we are—that's the way we are. But I don't see any stuff in us that can ever build up a civilization. We might as well give up if we can't do better than that, mightn't we? Why, we couldn't think at all when our blood was up—all that talk about Huns, and our gallant airmen dropping tons of bombs on the noncombatants of Cologne—you know what we thought about *their* air-raids. And now all this sanctimonious bother about pinning the war guilt on Germany. I understand that Germans deny it. They're right, too. Nobody wanted the war—not the sort of war they got. I thought for a while after I got to the front that we are all devils. And then I saw we are only fools. One thing is sure—we are all responsible, even compromisers like me who wouldn't fire a gun but went around helping patch up the wounded so that they could go back and kill some more."

Matey did not need now to ask what he meant. This was the nightmare stuff which had filled her nights on the ship, which she had dismissed in the morning as dreams. But this was no dream from which she could escape by waking up. Adrian was awake, and so was she. The dead men in the ruined house looked at her from the fog, moving their blackened lips to say, "You too helped to kill us." She tried to answer, "But you in your turn—" and shrank back from the endless vista of murder unrolling from this phrase. She said in a shaking voice, "I see; yes, Adrian, I understand. I—but we can't *stand* it to go on thinking that. There's nothing we can do now to change what's past—"

"There never was anything we could do. Sometimes, though, I wish I hadn't contented myself with creeping around, making myself feel better by picking up the pieces, without resisting, without crying out on the idiocy that did the breaking . . ."

He spoke in a low tone, but his phrase needed no hurling. It crashed like a stone through four years of Matey's life and his.

Matey stared out into the fog hemming them in mildly, implacably. She tried to think and could not. Not far from them a bell clinked faintly, striking on an invisible ship brought to a standstill as they were. Back of them their own ship's bell told the hour in answer.

"What else could we have done, Adrian?" she asked him finally.

He shrugged his shoulders and shook his head, his eyes on the enigmatic airy barrier of the fog.

"Do you mean—do you mean going to prison and all that? Adrian, you don't think you would have been more useful in prison than—"

It was evidently no new idea to Adrian. He answered at once with his invincible Fort honesty. "No, I might have had a higher opinion of myself now. But that's all." After a pause he added, as if he had been once more considering the possibility, "I'm glad somebody did. It had to be done. But I couldn't. I never thought of it at first—an American in Europe hadn't any responsibility, I supposed. Then when our own country was part of it and our army took over the ambulance service I had the choice either to enlist or go home. At my age the draft wouldn't have touched me. I could have begged the question. But that's not the whole truth. I didn't want to go home." He laughed harshly. "I knew it was the biggest show I'd ever see, and I wasn't willing to miss the last round. That's the way I 'hated war.' Later on I suppose a real pacifist might have refused to obey orders. But my orders were to pick up broken and bleeding men. I couldn't buy my self-respect at that price. My self-respect wasn't worth that much!"

Matey did not say aloud the sorrowful "Well, then—" which was in her mind at this admission. But Adrian heard it and answered, "I know, I know!" impatiently aware of his inconsistency. He added, "I *said* there was no use talking about it!"

They bent their heads to look down at the water lapping against the immovable sides of the anchored ship. It was no longer deep-sea water but humanized by its nearness to man. The ship lights showed bits of garbage floating in it, rotting orange-skins and half-decomposed shreds of cabbage.

Presently Adrian said, more quietly, "Don't take all this too seriously, Matey. I'll manage all right. I've got a living to earn and an honest way to earn it, and that's something to be everlastingly thankful for. I'm going to forget the last four years because I don't know what else to do about them. And I'm going to be cheerful. You'll see. It won't be hard, either. You and the children make my own corner of life plenty enough to live for—all anybody could dream of wanting—personally. I've still got my code. Apparently it isn't based on anything solid as I used to think, but it's part of me now and it'll last out my lifetime. I'm going right ahead with what I've been doing—trying in my small futile way to pick up a few pieces in this mess of a world. That'll keep me busy."

His last word struck another echo from Priscilla's old counsel that sounded like a warning in Matey's ear.

The bell on the invisible ship clanked out another half hour and was answered by their own.

Adrian roused himself then and stood straighter, turning away from the rail. Back of him the fog watched them both impassively out of its blind white eyes. "I don't think much of people who complain of what's the common lot," he told his wife, "but to live without any belief in a plan—or in some fixed values—"

Matey turned with him, and they began to walk toward their stateroom. She was too much shaken to speak. And yet her silence seemed hard and uncomprehending. . . . She broke it finally with some faltering Priscilla phrases, intended to do no more than to show her love and helpless sharing sympathy. "Don't you think, dear, perhaps things will look brighter once we get back to our own life—once we get home?" she asked timidly.

Adrian pressed her hand gently. "Yes, darling, perhaps they will." He spoke in a loving comforting tone, answering the intention in her voice and not the shallow childish words, and Matey knew he did not believe a word he said. In his eyes, where she had always before read unshakable affection and faith, there was now nothing but defeat.

4

"WHY do the *musique* play for, so early in the morning?" asked Petella, as she looked down at the dock sliding slowly beside the ship. The blaring trombone notes soared from one of the openings in the wharf wall.

"It's to welcome us back from the war," said a fellow passenger. Seeing the little girl's literal acceptance of this, he added, "No, it's probably because there are some officers in the first class and a bunch of privates in steerage."

"What tune are they playing?" asked Petella, accustomed only to French military music.

"I suppose 'See the Conquering Hero Comes,'" suggested the facetious passenger.

"Qu-o-oi? Qu'est-ce qu'il dit, Petella?" Brother nervously demanded a translation in a phrase which was soon to become almost his sole speech.

"Voici le héro conquérant," translated Petella.

"But where? Where?" asked Brother, turning his eyes here and there about the deck.

"Where indeed?" said Adrian. He walked to the other side of the deck and looked out through the remnants of yesterday's fog at the Hudson, city-soiled and dingy. He found his wife leaning over the rail there.

"Well, Matey?" he said.

"Well, Adrian." She found nothing else to answer. Their hands, touching, intertwined in a clasp.

A gust of wind stirred the thinning fog and poured around them the brazen breathing of the band.

"Gay, isn't it?" asked Adrian.

She asked, "Do you remember Aunt Tryntje's Civil War story of how the Rustdorf men came home?"

Yes, Adrian remembered.

"I asked her," said Matey, her voice trembling, "what made them cry."

A raucous yell rang out. *"American citizens this way!"* One more examination of papers.

"That's us," admitted Adrian, going off to collect the children.

The vast reaches of the pier were grayly dusky in the early dawn, and empty save for a few men in uniform. War regulations still held. The general public was not allowed to pass a high barrier at the far end. In spite of the early hour a good many people were massed behind its closely-set pickets.

Although they had little idea that, after the failure of the ship to land last night, any one of the Rustdorf family would be there to meet them, Matey and Adrian and the children walked toward this barrier, trying to distinguish faces in the dimly seen crowd.

A voice called, "Adrian!"

Adrian dropped Petella's hand and pressed his face against the pickets. Matey heard him say, "Father?"

A hand came through the pickets, a sinewy elderly hand. Adrian clasped it in both his. "Why, *Father!*" he said in a deep broken voice. It was as if he had forgotten he had a father. He clung to the hand as if he had been a little boy lost.

"Adrian's father can understand!" thought Matey. "And we, who never before understood him—oh, *he* is the one who perhaps can help Adrian!"

She saw him now. At the first sight of his white hair and sunken eyes she thought with a shock, "How old he has grown! He is a feeble old man." But when he turned his eyes on her, when he tried to smile and to shape "dear daughter" with his trembling lips, she too forgot everything save the miracle of having a father.

Brother, outraged at being forgotten, pulled at her skirts and clamored, *"Je veux voir mon grandpapa!"*

Petella put both arms through the paling, shouting, "Padre! Padre! Do you remember me?"

Matey stooped and picked up the little boy, presenting him to his grandfather. "He doesn't speak a word of English." Half laughing, half apologetic, she said the first trivial words that came into her mind.

"Mais si! Mais si! Je sais parler anglais," Brother told his shadowy grandfather behind the bars. "One! two! free! *four!*" he proclaimed triumphantly.

The customs took even more than its usual interminable time, the Forts' trunk being one of the last unloaded from the hold. There were endless war formalities about papers. The children were allowed to go out through the gate in the barrier to their grandfather, while Adrian and Matey for the last time grimly went through the ordeal of standing in a slow line inching its way toward a desk, only to be told when they reached it that they should have been in some other line.

It was three o'clock before they were free, and they were extravagantly weary when they went to look up the others. Brother was taking a nap, his head on Padre's folded-up overcoat, while Petella and her grandfather had a visit. The little girl and the old man were sitting hand in hand, the child talking earnestly, her head tipped back to look up into the old face gazing down tenderly at her. Matey knew that the sight was touching, but she felt only a nervous irritability over being so delayed.

Adrian's father saw them approaching and smiled to them. "Petella's been telling me about Toutou's tricks," he said, getting up. "A very remarkable dog, I take it." They might never have gone away, for anything in his manner now.

This time Matey found no fault with the transparent truthfulness with which his manner always reflected the reality of things. The sober every day quality of his greeting was the right one. The friction of petty difficulties of landing had worn away their emotion. "Wake up, *petit frère,*" she murmured to the little boy.

He bounded up. "Are we home?" he cried eagerly. The unhome-like height and official varnished woodwork of the waiting-room struck his eye. "Oh, *pas encore!*" he said, drooping in disappointment against his mother's shoulder.

"Priscilla and her eldest girl were down all yesterday afternoon, waiting for your ship," Adrian's father told her. "They stayed till after dark. But Lucy has been outgrowing her strength lately . . . she's shot up very tall all of a sudden. And Priscilla thought she was getting tired out, so she took her home. They would have been down again today if anybody'd dreamed it would take so long."

"How's Aunt Tryntje?" asked Adrian, shouldering his overcoat and taking Brother on one arm.

"Thee'll see for thyself," answered his father. "All right, very cheerful, quite herself . . . except that the war has thrown her into the past altogether. She still thinks I am my father, and all the rest of it. But that's not uncommon with very old people." He stooped to pick up his share of the bags to be carried. "Well, perhaps they're not so far off," he remarked. "Who are we, after all, but our forefathers?"

5

The four o'clock train up the river is not a fast one. There was time for much give and take of family news, for Brother to get very fidgety, for Matey to forget about the irritating delay on the dock, for Adrian's father to look older and older as his fatigue settled like gray dust on his deeply lined face. After a while he and Adrian moved to a vacant seat and began to discuss business.

Matey was holding Brother on her lap in a vain effort to keep him quiet enough for another nap. From time to time he asked plaintively *when* they would be home. During a stop at a tiny way-station, "See all those birds!" said Petella, trying to amuse the weary little boy. "What are they, Maman?"

Used as she was to it, there was still moments when Matey was startled at being required by life to be Maman, to know everything, to be all-enduring, all-consoling, all-wise. "Wild ducks," she said, looking at the neatly made birds riding composedly at anchor in a small inlet, "on their way north. Every spring they fly clear north, 'way to Canada somewhere. Perhaps they're waiting as we did last night for the fog to clear."

"How ever do they know the way?" asked Petella.

"It's called instinct," said Matey.

"What's instinct?" asked Brother. He did not ask so many questions as Petella, but he had an inspired gift for putting hard ones.

"Well, I suppose it's something that tells you which way to go when you don't *know* which way to go," his mother hazarded.

"How ever does anybody get it?" inquired Petella with surprise.

The train had moved on now, was speeding beside the slate-gray river, which had broadened out till through the mist the opposite bank looked dim and unsubstantial.

"I wish I knew, Petella," said Matey wearily. "Perhaps by trying a great many times?"

Petella was silent. Her mother's tone had again sounded as if she had asked too many questions. Somehow she never knew she was asking questions till some grown-up looked impatient. She stared out of the window, saw churches and houses and factories jumbled together on the opposite bank, ghostly gray in the mist, and turned her head quickly to ask her mother what town that was. But she did not. Her mother was looking at the town too, queerly. For once Petella remembered in time and did not put her question. She sighed, turned away, and forgot about the town, watching a line of deeply freighted barges towed down the river by a puffing tug.

Her mother said to her, "Petella dear, do you see that town across there? It is Newburgh. And in one of the churches there—can you make out those steeples?—my father and mother were married."

It was the first time she had ever spoken to her children of her parents.

"Were they?" commented Petella, watching a little dog run barking along the top of the last of the barges. "Brother, see that dog. He looks a little bit like Toutou, don't you think?"

Brother gave the dog but an absent look. "*When* will we be home, Maman?" he asked, wriggling on her lap.

"Let's play tit-tat-toe," suggested Priscilla resourcefully.

Over their heads and over the gray brooding formlessness of the river, Matey watched the distant town slowly slipping back into the past as she rushed forward into the future. She had not thought of her parents for a long time, and she was astonished at what she felt at the sight of that church steeple. Not the old shrinking away, the old throb of pain for those darkened days of her youth. No, it was pity she felt as she imagined her father and mother standing there together before the altar, young people beginning life. With them she looked forward at the life they had meant to lead together, and she remembered what their life had been. Had they felt even at the beginning the cloud which hung over their coming together, their consciousness of the sorrow they had caused? Probably they held up before themselves the thought, "But what else could we have done!" And yet . . . "So they did name her Priscilla!" Was that name a propitiatory frightened gesture of young parents who had lost one child, who began to see that something was wrong, to guess that perhaps they had missed the path and were lost, that the passion strong enough to break through all the material obstacles which kept them apart was not strong enough to cope with their own weakness?

No, for an instant of divination Matey felt that until the very end they had never guessed this, that her father's death had found them still living provisionally, knowing half-consciously that their irritability came from the temporary color of their lives, always feeling themselves perfectly able to turn aside from their crooked by-path back to the real road which in the church at Newburgh they had not doubted lay before them. Without this faith they could not have lived. They had never dreamed of making their whole lives out of that mean lesser stuff which was all they had showed to their children. Not death alone had embittered and ennobled their last moments together, but the panicstruck realization that their chance had gone. They had had time but for one tragic step along the road they had meant all along to follow.

The river was dimming now to the blue of twilight. From the dark unlovely bodies of the small houses on the opposite bank living souls bloomed out like stars. "But you don't see them till night comes . . ." thought Matey, remorsefully.

The brakeman put his head through the door and announced in the old local speech-tune, first questioning and then proclaiming, "RUST*dorf*? *Rust*DORF!"

Petella bounced from her seat and ran to the platform of the car. She was first down, first to fall shouting into Aunt Priscilla's arms, first to try to embrace all at the same time the four foster-cousins. A wild babble of voices, exclamations, questions, explanations, arose as the others followed her. Adrian's father carried Brother. Matey and Adrian followed with the bags. From the platform Matey caught sight of Priscilla's face as, smiling and weeping, she bent lovingly over her small namesake.

The first sight of a well-known face after long absence is like the first look at a newborn baby, sharpened by a prophetic insight which later familiarity dims into the blindness of everyday life. Matey saw that the surface of Priscilla's face was older, the flesh of the cheeks that had been apple-firm a little flaccid. New lines showed at the corners of her lips, paler than they had been. But it was still a face of girlish immaturity.

Priscilla was no older, and Matey guessed that she never would be. Her heart rose in an indignant bound of protecting affection, as if she had seen for the first time that Priscilla had been lamed by life. "Priscilla, *darling!*" she called, running to her. But Brother's voice called for help. Frantically above the clamor he shouted from his grandfather's shoulder, *"Qu-est-ce qu'ils disent, Maman? Qu-est-ce qu'ils disent?"*

"I'd better take him, Padre," she said, holding out her arms to the wild-eyed little boy. He flung himself into them and clung about her neck. It was sweet to be Maman, all-consoling.

Priscilla had her Ford there, a later Ford, and by dint of every grown person's holding a child or two on his knees they managed to squeeze in, to the accompaniment of much cheerful fun from Priscilla. "Here, Petella, take Lucy on your knees, will you?" she said, disposing of them in inverse order. As she stepped on the starter she called back over her shoulder, to Petella's joy, "All people with false teeth are hereby warned to hold them in. This road hasn't been mended since the frost went out."

As the car in low speed ground slowly up the hill Adrian murmured in his wife's ear, "Are you here yet?"

"No, oh, *no,*" she told him. "In a minute I'll open my eyes on the Gare du Nord."

"Aunt May-ee-ty!" shrilled Mary Ellen from the floor somewhere. "Is Petella going to be in my class at school? I'm in the fourth grade. Can't Petella come in tomorrow?"

"Qu-est-ce-qu'elle dit, Petella? *Qu-est-ce-qu'elle dit?"* came Brother's voice anxiously.

Petella told him.

"Gracious! What makes you talk French so *fast!*" complained Mary Ellen.

They turned the corner at the top of the road. The Square was on one side. To the last leafless, early-Gothic twig arch, it looked as it had to Matey on the spring day when she walked across it with Sumner, on her way to find Adrian.

They passed the Friends' burying-ground, the humble low headstones glimmering faintly white. There lay the unknown woman whose name Petella carried.

The plain brick sides and barn-like roof of the Friends' Meeting-House loomed up under its guardian oaks. Matey and Adrian looked from its four-square honesty into each other's eyes.

"Petella, have you forgotten all your American?" asked Priscilla. "Do you remember any of the riddles we used to have such fun with? Do you know how much wood a woodchuck would chuck if a woodchuck would chuck wood?"

"Oh, say it again, Aunt Priscilla!" called Petella, enchanted.

Brother nestled on his mother's lap. "When are we going to get *home?*" he murmured plaintively.

The car passed the bank. Adrian turned his head to look at it. "The old oak has gone," he remarked to his father, who answered, "Yes, the whole top blew out in a storm last year. Not enough of it left to live. I had to have it cut down." He added, "Thee'll have to plant a new one, Adrian."

His son did not answer.

With every moment the twilight was becoming a deeper blue, the lighted windows in the familiar houses they were passing a deeper yellow. A few stars shone through the leafless tree branches. Matey's heart began to beat suffocatingly. They were almost home.

"We thought you'd rather have your house to yourselves just at first," said Adrian's father with his plain dry manner. "We're going to drop you now and come in later, after supper. If Aunt Tryntje feels up to it I'll bring her around."

"Nobody else would have thought of that!" Matey felt, gratefully.

The car stopped. They were before their own house. Lights gleamed from its windows.

"Rebecca and all the neighbors," explained Adrian's father, "have been getting it ready for you. You'll find the door open.

They got some food into the house, too." Brother was set down on the sidewalk. Instantly, looking like a little goblin in the dusk, he ran down the steps, along the path, and up on the porch. After an instant's pause, *"Je ne peux pas ouvrir la po-o-rte!"* he wailed tragically.

"I'll open it for you," cried Petella, scampering after him.

The returned refugees picked up their bags, walked down the steps and along the path. Up and down this path they had walked that night, in that other existence . . . troubled and uncertain, yes, but so young, so unaware of what it meant to be a human being. They alone had changed. Everything else, from the street to the trees, showed no slightest alteration. The owl's feather might still be lying there, tiny in its infinity.

"Here on this porch," thought Matey, as they stepped across it, "I sat, thinking, 'I have enough and so everything is all right.'" Adrian lifted the latch and opened the door. In the lighted hall Petella knelt, helping Brother take off his rubbers. Over her head the little boy looked at them soberly. Behind the children, in the living-room, a sea-coal fire glowed placidly in the grate. Adrian and Matey came in and closed the door behind them. They did not look at each other but at the children.

"Well, how do you like it, Petella?" asked Adrian, setting down the suit-cases and taking off his hat.

Petella's face shone happily. As if she had never noticed it before, Matey thought with astonished thankfulness, "But she *has* a happy face, Petella has. I wonder why!"

"I remember *ev*-ery *sin*-gle THING!" Petella told her father, "Right through *there* is the *salle-à-manger.*"

They went through the dining-room door and found the table laid for supper. "Oh, I remember the dishes!" shouted Petella, clasping her hands in ecstasy. Brother said nothing and Petella remembered that they were to speak French for him. *"Tu vois, les petites roses sur les tasses . . ."* She pointed them out to him like old friends.

A folded bit of paper lay on the plate at Matey's place. She opened it and read in Rebecca's unformed handwriting, a little tremulous with age now, "Creamed potatoes, baked beans, and Boston brown bread in the oven. Cocoa for the children on the stove. Gingerbread in the cake-tin. Applesauce in the ice-box."

That had been a favorite supper menu of the old days. That was what they had eaten so often, gathered together around the table like four children, unaware of what it means to be a human being. No part of the homecoming affected Matey more. She had to dash cold water on her eyes at the kitchen sink, and when she reached blindly for a roller towel and found a clean one waiting faithfully for her in the old place she buried her face in it, drawing long breaths.

They dropped their wraps where they took them off, and while Adrian carried the bags upstairs and Petella took Brother for a tour of the house Matey made tea, put the food on the table, and called the family.

Brother so far had not said a word, and he ate absent-mindedly with little of the gourmet's gusto for food which was part of his charm. They took pains not to say a word of the English which was so distressing to him, but he did not seem to notice. Mostly it was Petella who chattered about how big little Mary Ellen had grown, and did Maman know that Aunt Priscilla's Lucy was in the *High* School. And oh, *wasn't* Aunt Priscilla lovely! "She's so *cheerful!*" said her niece enthusiastically. *"Elle est si gaie!* I never saw anybody so cheerful. Aren't cheerful people nice!"

Halfway through the meal Brother pushed back his chair, murmured something to his mother, and went out through the door into the hall. Petella said responsibly to her mother, "I showed him where the bathroom is." But he did not come back. Presently Petella was sent to fetch him. She too did not return and now from the hall came a low babble of voices, broken by sobs. Adrian and Matey hurried out and found Brother, weeping broken-heartedly, face down on the floor, near the closet under the stairs. Petella, crouching by him, looked up from her efforts to comfort him, and said, half crying herself, "He expected to find the kiddie-car under the stairs! He ran there to look the first thing when he and I came in. It makes him feel so *bad!*"

Matey sat down on the floor and pulled the little weeping boy up on her lap, holding him close, murmuring lovingly in his ear reasonable, logical reminders of reality. "Why, Brother *chéri*, don't you remember, we took the kiddie-car *with* us, and you had it in France, all the time . . . riding up and down in the Luxembourg. Just think a minute. We used to leave it with the *concierge* generally, you know, not to carry it up and down all those stairs every day. And when we came away you gave it to little Mélanie. You wanted to, dear. You were the one who thought of it. You had grown too big for it, anyhow, don't you remember? How could it be here when we had it there?"

Petella said, "*I* told him all that when he first looked in. And just now, too. But he just said over and over, he *thought* all the time it would be there when we got home and he could get right on it and ride off. He kept thinking about it on the ship, he said, and on the train. That's why he was in such a hurry to get home. And when he opened the door and saw the closet all empty it made him feel so . . ."

"Look here, Brother, I'll get you a new one tomorrow," said Adrian, "or a velocipede. With red wheels!"

Brother said bitterly between his sobs, *"Ce n'est pas ça."*

His father and mother looked at each other. Adrian had an inspiration. "Or I'll get you one just like the old one," he told Brother's heaving shoulders.

The little boy repeated unreasonably, tragically, on a higher note, *"Mais ce n'est pas ça!"*

Matey ventured, "Suppose we send a new one to Mélanie and get Tante Ziza to send the old one back here to you?"

But nothing they could say reached the solitary heart of the little boy, sobbing alone in a mysterious astonished distress, far beyond the power of Maman to console. Still a little boy small enough to be held in his mother's arms, he had come face to face with the implacable rule of life which forbids even the slightest, even the sweetest return to the past. He must go on, go on, and become some one else.

Adrian stood looking down at his son with a somber sympathy. "The best thing's to put him to bed," he said, accepting their helplessness. "He's had a long day of it."

6

When she came downstairs from putting Brother to bed Matey found Priscilla, her stout, comfortable husband, and Lucy in the living-room. Remembering what a forlorn old widower he had been, she said as she shook hands with her brother-in-law, "Peter, you positively get younger as the years go by."

"Who wouldn't," he answered, "with Priscilla to make a home for him?"

Priscilla looked pleased and patted her husband's arm. Lucy got up abruptly and went over to stand near the fire in the grate, looking down at it moodily.

"How that child has grown! She is as tall as Priscilla and I," thought Matey.

Petella was on her aunt's knees, fingering Aunt Priscilla's brooch, one arm around Aunt Priscilla's neck. She had evidently been telling the newcomers about Brother's metaphysical sorrow, for at the first pause she went on, "And no matter what Papa and Maman said, he kept telling them back, 'But *that's* not the trouble! *That's* not it!' Whatever do you suppose it was!"

Aunt Priscilla answered, "Why, dear child, it was nothing at all but just that poor little Brother is too tired. If it had really had anything to do with the kiddie-car he could have told you what the matter was. You just see, tomorrow morning after a good night's sleep he won't remember a thing about it. It was just tired nerves and a notion."

During this reasonable, sensible explanation, which quite satisfied and reassured Petella, Matey noticed Lucy's eyes were fixed with an ironical expression on her foster-mother. Those eyes were shadowed, and the girlish cheek was very thin. Matey remembered now that Adrian's father had said that Lucy wasn't very well. How could the child have grown so tall? But after all, she was past fifteen. What an entirely other person a girl of fifteen was from a noisy bouncing little girl of eleven! Matey wondered if that delicate pretty face was weak or only sensitive?

"Aunt Priscilla," asked Petella, fondly tightening her arm around her aunt's neck, "have you still got that lovely doll-house over at your house that Uncle Peter made for Mary Ellen?"

Priscilla smiled down at the little girl. "Yes, indeed, dear. We saved it for you and Brother. And Mary Ellen has repapered every room in it. It's *lovely!*"

On her face was the not-to-be-imitated expression of some one who really did think it lovely. Petella looked up adoringly at her aunt. Matey thought gratefully, "It'll be a good thing for the children to be back near Priscilla."

She understood very well what Petella was feeling, because in a way she felt it too—felt restfully that Priscilla could be counted on always to produce cheerfulness, to reject all elements from which cheerfulness could not be extracted. At that moment it seemed right that there should be in the world childish undeveloped people like Priscilla who fixed their attention on what was pleasant and shut their eyes to what was dark and true.

"There are some little kittens in our woodshed too," Aunt Priscilla told her namesake.

"Oh, *are* there?" breathed Petella.

"We're going to let you and Brother make your choice first."

"Oh, are *we* going to have one for *us?*" cried Petella.

"Why not two? One for each of you."

"Oh, Aunt Priscilla!" cried the little girl, scarcely able to endure her ecstasy.

Slow steps sounded on the porch. Adrian sprang up to open to his father and Aunt Tryntje, the white-haired older Adrian looking almost youthful beside the aged feebleness of his aunt. Matey was shocked by Aunt Tryntje's decrepitude. Seeing her, who had kept till late in life a free strong step, shuffle in, fumbling, tottering, wavering like an old baby learning to walk, Matey felt as outraged as though an indignity had been offered before her eyes to a defenseless victim.

She felt this apparently more than Aunt Tryntje did, for the thousand wrinkles of her face were wreathed into a bright expression of welcome, and the usual confusion of greeting ended by her saying loudly looking all around, "Where's Adrian? Little Adrian, I mean. I wanted to see him. I want to see who he looks like!"

Matey offered to take her upstairs for a look at the sleeping child. As Matey steered the bulky old body around the turn of the landing she heard Lucy's voice, "Aunt Matey, may I come too?"

Matey looked back, saw the girl's thin face turned up toward her with an eager look on it.

"Why, of course, Lucy," she said in a little surprise.

The three generations of women stepped as noiselessly as they could down the hall. Matey opened the door to the children's room. The light struck in and fell across the little bed where Brother lay.

Aunt Tryntje shaded her old eyes and looked at him intently. So did his mother. She gazed down at her son, lost in wonder at the immortal strength and never-dying weakness come from beyond the centuries, beyond human thought, to do battle in his breast as he struggled to find his way forward into his share of happiness and misery.

"He's all Fort. He looks exactly like his sister," whispered Aunt Tryntje, "exactly as Madeleine did at his age."

Matey looked up startled till she remembered Aunt Tryntje's confusion of the generations, and startled again to find Lucy's eyes as deeply on her face as hers had been on Brother's.

Matey pulled the covers up over Brother, tucked them in, went out into the hall, and closed the door behind her. Halfway to the stairs walked Aunt Tryntje and Lucy, side by side, Aunt Tryntje's broad sagging back, old, finished, and done for, Lucy's piteously immature, with narrow shoulders and thin hips. As Matey looked Aunt Tryntje took the girl's arm. Lucy braced herself, but as the old woman continued, with the ruthless self-absorption of the old—and the young—to lean on her, the unhardened bones and untoughened sinews of the girl's body bent sideways. Matey thought, "They'll never get downstairs that way." Putting Lucy gently aside she said, "Better let me take her down, dear." Fearing that the girl's young vanity might be wounded, she smiled at her to ask her not to mind being thought the weaker. But she saw in Lucy's eyes only relief and gratitude.

"He's all thy side of the family, Adrian," said Aunt Tryntje again on coming back into the living-room, "His mouth is the very double of Madeleine's."

"I believe thee's right, Aunt Tryntje," said Adrian's father, the only other person in the room who had ever seen the long-dead Madeleine.

"Of course I am," she said contentedly, reaching into her bag for her knitting.

There was a silence, which Peter Russell broke with conscious geniality. "It certainly is good to have you all back safe and sound, but I must say I shall miss your letters. You made everything so vivid. I never thought I could get so interested in foreigners. Many's the time I've said to Priscilla, 'Why, those Vinets are just like Rustdorf folks.' Wasn't it extraordinary that"—he fumbled a moment over a forgotten name—"that your friend's husband should have been alive after all?"

"Yes, indeed," said Priscilla cheerfully, "*wasn't* that the greatest piece of luck! I think the Vinets came out pretty well, Mme. Vinet with both her daughters in good health, all nicely established in their own homes again, their husbands with them, and their children all around them."

These words, with the expression that went with them of bright comfortable satisfaction, penetrated slowly to Matey's brain. She was stricken silent by them. Here was one-dimensional truth that was staggering. What comment was possible?

None was necessary. Priscilla had turned to Adrian with a question about the weather they had had on the trip home.

"Just excuse me a second," Matey murmured. "I want to put the food away in the ice-box."

In the dining-room she was aware of a shadow beside her. Lucy was there. "Let me stay out here with you, Aunt Matey," she said in a low tone. "I'd love to help you."

Matey looked across the table into the girl's eyes. They were fixed on her with a savage imploring intensity. What they cried out was unmistakable. "Let me lean on you! Let me hang my whole weight on your neck. I can see that you are strong. What is your strength for if not to help me?"

Matey's weary flesh quailed at this summons. Had she not enough to carry as it was? But who was she to turn away from egotistic youth? There rose before her memory a room in a hospital years ago and a girl—older than Lucy was now—flung across the bed, a girl who had been rock-like in her obliviousness of what death meant to a dying man, absorbed only by what it meant to her.

She had looked down at the tea-pot in her hands. She looked up now, smiled, and said, "Why, glad to have you, Lucy. Just bring the beans and the cream pitcher along, will you, into the pantry."

After they had set away the food, the voices from the living-room continuing voluble and animated, they began to clear off the dishes, piling them up in the sink. Lucy apparently had nothing to say, and Matey was absorbed in a thought that had come to her when Priscilla spoke about how comfortably off the war had left the Vinets. She knew what Priscilla would think about their parents—if she ever allowed herself to think about them at all. With the thin hardness of judgment based on a one-dimensional view of life she would say that they had been a vain self-seeking man and woman who between them reduced marriage to an ignoble struggle to show off better than the other one and who were of such coarse spiritual fiber that this struggle did not make them suffer much. "That is the truth, too," thought Matey. An echo of what she had felt on looking at the Newburgh church steeple came to her mind, but now it seemed fanciful and rather sentimental. She perceived that a good deal of vitality is necessary to hold two dimensions in a human mind. She felt Lucy's eyes on her again, knew that she must be looking sad, and tried to force her face into a more cheerful expression.

They took the table-cloth off, and Matey stepped out of the back door to shake the crumbs from it. It was a mild night, full of the moist odor of newly thawed earth and wet leaves. Matey stood for a moment on the back porch, looking at the lights on the other side of the river, very large and hazy in the damp air. "All the same," she thought, "whatever else Father and Mother can have meant to do, it was not to live as they did," and a tender pity for them stole upon her like the breath of the spring night. Lucy had followed her out and now stood beside her, looking where she looked. "It seems good to see those lights again," Matey told her. "I've thought of them so often while we were away."

The girl drew a long breath but said nothing.

They went back into the kitchen. "Lucy, you go get Petella, will you, dear, and let's put her to bed."

The little girl had almost fallen asleep in her aunt's arms. While Matey undressed her Lucy watched, so silent that once or twice Matey forgot she was there. Laid in her bed, Petella came to herself enough to nestle down in it with conscious pleasure, and turning her head, to send up one smile to her mother before she closed her eyes with a long, blissful sigh.

"May I sit on the sofa with you?" asked Lucy in a whisper as they went down the stairs.

Matey made room for her, and presently felt her hand taken and held tightly by thin hot flexible young fingers. Adrian had advanced as far as the fog in his account of the weather during their trip home and was describing how thick it had been. Matey turned her head to whisper, "Do you play the piano, Lucy? Your fingers feel like a pianist's."

"I've been taking lessons of Mrs. Steenson," Lucy whispered back, "but she's going away."

"Would you like to study with me for a while?" asked Aunt Matey, and felt her hand frantically squeezed.

The clock struck.

"Goodness gracious, Lucy dear!" said Priscilla, "What am I thinking about to let you sit up so late? Put on your things this minute, darling, and run along home. What would Dr. Van der Water say if he could see you up at ten!"

As Lucy went obediently out into the hall for her wraps, Priscilla explained to Matey and Adrian, "Lucy's been outgrowing herself lately, as Aunt Tryntje says, and Dr. Van der Water is giving her a tonic that has some iron in it. He says she must have lots of sleep, too."

Matey went with Lucy to the outside door in the hall. The girl leaped fiercely at her, gave her an intense embrace, and ran out across the porch. Looking after her, Matey saw her skipping down the path like a little girl.

When Matey turned around she found Priscilla had followed her into the hall. "I wanted to talk to you about Lucy, Matey," she said, and then stopped, her old prison walls around her. She forced herself to go on, falteringly, her eyes a little wild like those of a person doing violence to himself. "I'm so glad you're back, Matey, for Lucy's sake. I—I love Lucy so! And when she was still a little girl . . ." She stopped, closed her eyes as if to think what she wished to say, and opening them again went on simply, honestly, "You know, Matey, I never was emotional myself, and I don't understand emotional people." She ended humbly, "I feel that Lucy needs more than I can give her—now."

Matey took her sister's hand in hers and pressed it. They stood for a moment in silence. Priscilla murmured, looking deeply into her sister's eyes, "Oh, Matey, I feel so much *safer* with you near at hand."

Together they went back to the living-room. Matey looked around from one to another. Padre, looking very old, his eyes closed, leaned back in the easy chair; Aunt Tryntje's lips moved silently in time with her clicking needles. Peter Russell seemed to be dutifully making conversation, Adrian answering him with weary courtesy.

"Matey's letter never told us much about the details of *your* work," Peter was saying. "I'd like to know more about it."

"All right," Adrian answered; "there isn't much to say about it, but I'll tell you anything you want to know."

"I'll tell thee what *I* want to know," said Aunt Tryntje unexpectedly. "I want to know if thee saw any Rebels close to—to talk to, I mean. I'd just like to know what in the world they've got to say for themselves."

For an instant no one knew what to answer. Then Adrian told her seriously, "They've got just the same things to say for themselves that we have."

"Oh, come now," said Peter Russell, at a loss between the two wars. "The wanton destruction, you know, the devastation! What was done to Belgium. Our boys never did anything like that!"

"They never got the chance," replied Adrian.

Adrian's father opened his eyes and nodded. "My regiment was with Sherman," he said.

His words echoed in a long silence. Matey heard them trampling back and back and back through the centuries from one war to the one before it. No one found a word to say.

But Priscilla knew other tools than words with which to shatter dangerous silences. She coughed nervously, rose to her feet, tucked her handkerchief up her sleeve, and said, "Come along, Peter, it's time we were going. Matey, you look tired. You look worse than tired; you look blue. Go to bed, dear. I always tell my girls when they get the blues that a good night's sleep is what they need."

"It's time for us to go too, Adrian," said Aunt Tryntje, struggling to her feet. Mr. Fort turned to Priscilla. "Would you and Peter take Aunt Tryntje home for me? I want to talk to Matey and Adrian a minute about a matter of business."

But when Matey returned from seeing the Russells and Aunt Tryntje out of the front door she did not find business being talked. Adrian was pacing up and down the living-room. His father sat looking at him out of sunken old eyes. As she came in Adrian sat down abruptly, leaning forward, his clasped hands hanging between his knees, and broke out almost as if against his will, "Father, you lived through it! How *could* you?"

His father did not give his old rejoinder now, did not say with a darkening face and his old rough accent of impatience with ignorance, "Oh, there's no use talking about it!" He received his son's question into one of his capacious silences.

Matey's heart fluttered in a painful hope as she waited for his answer. She had thought on the pier, when she saw Adrian's father, that he could read Adrian's riddle for him as she could not, that he could show them in a few wise words how it was all right after all.

But when he spoke Matey saw that what she had wanted of him was what those aching women's hearts in Europe had with so wild and childish a folly wanted of President Wilson, a ready-made solution. He gave her instead one of those invitations to reflect on life, deeply, bitterly if need be, which, like Mme. Vinet, he brought out when asked for short-cut affirmations. He asked of Adrian, "Has it ever occurred to thee that the immanence of death may be one of the things—as well as our bestial pleasure in violence—which gives wartime experience such intensity of meaning? I've thought of that lately. People of imagination, of course, always feel death at hand, but war makes it obvious even to the thick-witted. And there's no doubt about it, to feel the closeness of death gives dignity to life—keeps you from being too helpless before trifles."

This was not at all what Matey had expected. Adrian was looking at his father in silence, frowning a little, attentively, as if he did not see yet what the other was meaning.

The old man left this idea with him and went on to another. "I've thought sometimes—looking back—that perhaps the new vitality that comes to men in war may be partly like the unity that comes to a quarrelsome country when it's attacked from outside. We're all full of warring impulses stabbing each other in the back. Perhaps the outside pressure of fear in war life makes them all stand together for a time in self-defense and gives a temporary inner peace."

He shook his head. "No, these are nonessentials, of course. The core of the matter is that nobody can get along without a purpose. And war supplies a purpose—a poor, false, imitation purpose, but it's hard to question it as long as the noise of fighting is going on. And we are so starving for it we'll take even the poorest imitation rather than nothing."

He ended by a question apparently addressed to Matey. "But why do we talk melodramatically, as if war were in an outside compartment different from life? All that can be found in war—appeal to the beast in us—to the man—isn't it in every day of life, if lived with imagination?"

"If you're putting that question to me, Padre," said Matey sadly, "I feel as if you were standing a long way off from me, pointing out something that I can't see at all. I haven't any head for abstractions, you know. You sound to me as if you were defending war."

"No, Matey, only men." He looked up at the clock and went on, "And that wasn't in the least what I stayed here to say, anyhow. Adrian's exclamation set me off on something else. I have a proposition that concerns you both."

He explained it briefly and drily, with his usual impersonality. He was neither young nor well, he said. In fact it had been hard to hold out till his son's return. He could not go on at the bank, the doctor told him. Adrian would need some one who could learn to be bookkeeper and teller. Why not Matey? The hours were not long. The work was nothing more than any intelligent grown person could learn. The children would be in school most of the day from now on, and since he had been obliged to have a nurse-housekeeper since Aunt Tryntje's failing in strength, Rebecca was free to give all her time to the younger Forts. There was nothing picturesque about the job at the bank, just plain useful work. But really useful, he insisted, with a depth to it that didn't show in the flat surface statement that it amounted to no more than helping people hold on to their money. The point was that in the modern world of capital, money—whether you liked to have it so or not—stood for independence—freedom—personal dignity. What did Matey think?

Matey's mind, only beginning to stagger out of the past into the present, balked stupidly at the notion of stepping toward the future. She could scarcely think what he was talking about. At her bewildered look her father-in-law said, "No hurry. No hurry about deciding. I've thought of it a good deal of late. But it's perfectly new to thee."

Adrian added, looking at Matey anxiously. "Yes, it's much too soon for her even to think of it. I would like it fine, of course. When Father first spoke of it, I jumped at it—but I'd hate it if you didn't feel free to decide as you like. Wait till you get your breath."

Mr. Fort said good night, turned to go, remembered that he had not yet left the duplicate keys to the bank with Adrian, and handed them over. Adrian put them in his pocket and went with his father to the door. It closed behind him. The returned refugees were alone in their home.

They stepped about soberly in the usual closing-up tasks.

After a discussion about whether it was warm enough to let the fire go out Adrian went downstairs to put more coal on the furnace. Matey locked the front door and drew up a fire-screen in front of the still glowing fire in the grate. As she did this her eye caught the wavy irregularity of the wall-paper which had been pasted over the old wall-oven more than a century ago, after the return of another war refugee, in a vain attempt to seal away from sight a reminder of the filthiness of war.

She was overcome with a hideous, unbearable disappointment, like Brother's, at the lack of something she had confidently expected to find. She could have put her head down on the mantelpiece and wept as inconsolably as he, in as mysterious a grief. Why had she been so frantically eager to reach this house? What had she thought would be waiting for her there? Her old outgrown self? The old safe world in which she had been that old self?

She was still standing staring at the sealed-up oven when Adrian came up from the cellar. "Ready, dear?" he asked, a hand on the button of the electric light in the hall. When Matey turned around to nod her assent he was standing under its hard, unsparing light, looking very tired.

They went upstairs without a word.

7

They lay down for that first night in their own bed as weary animals lie down on the straw of their stables, feeling in each other's presence only the blunted satisfaction which makes horses stand together under the same tree rather than at opposite sides of the pasture. Adrian put his hand out to take Matey's, and holding it, fell asleep in the position in which he had lain down, without once stirring. Really asleep. His hand relaxed to utter limpness. Matey wondered at him. It would be hours, she thought, before her troubled nerves would be still.

And yet she must have fallen asleep, for now, much later, she felt herself waking. Slowly she floated up to consciousness, did not know who she was, nor where, lay looking out at the black sky, as if she had been a disembodied spirit wandering forlornly through the vastness of space.

The night boat going up the river hooted hoarsely, and a train on the west side answered with two long calls.

Like a falling star her spirit dropped from space to its earthly home, to Matey's body, lying by her husband's. She turned toward him, laying her head on his shoulder. Still asleep, he put an arm around her.

The fog was gone. This was the first thought in Matey's mind as she woke to a morning of sunshine pouring matter-of-factly into their bedroom windows. Those windows, which during the night had opened out upon eternity, now looked only into the upper branches of a soft-maple tree. It was in bloom, its smooth young branches studded thick with a rosy fire of blossoms. A robin flew with the clumsy energy of his race to a branch and perched on it, tipping back and forth to get his balance. When he was poised, he made with loud cheerfulness the unimaginative, one-dimensional statement about warm weather and plenty of worms with which robins always greet the spring. As she lay listening to the bird's stout-hearted prose Matey was astonished to find that physical vitality had come back to her good useful faithful body and that with the disappearance of the deadly physical fatigue the world really looked another place.

She turned her head to see what the new day had brought to Adrian's face, and with the movement his eyes opened. He looked rested. He smiled at her. "Welcome home, Matey," he said. He raised his head to look around the familiar room. "I believe I've almost landed," he told her. "Last night I was still hurtling through space." His eyes fell on the blossoming tree in the sunshine. "Hello, the fog's gone," he said.

As if startled, the robin flew blunderingly out of the tree. Steps crunched on the side path, went around to the back yard, and returned again to the street.

"The milkman," Adrian interpreted the familiar sequences. "Priscilla or somebody must have told him to come. Sounds as though he hadn't missed a day, doesn't it? Must be twenty-five minutes of seven. Now I'm dead sure we've got home."

They lay silent for a time, their eyes turning toward their future—upon them now, almost the present.

Adrian asked dreamily, "Matey, did you ever think in France that perhaps we never would get home?"

"Oh, ever so many times."

"It would have been lots more dramatic if we hadn't, wouldn't it? All four of us to go up in smoke, bombed in an air-raid or something. Less of an anticlimax than just to come back and go on stodgily helping people save their money in Rustdorf."

He spoke whimsically, but something experienced and seasoned in Matey made her protest against taking this lightly. "Oh, Adrian, if there's anything in the world that's cheap and shoddy, it's 'dramatic living.'"

He turned his head to look at her, surprised at her heat. She told him, "I know, I know you didn't mean it seriously. But it brought home to me what an awful thing life turns into when you always plan for how it's going to look from the outside. You don't know how miserable it makes you on the inside!"

"What do *you* know about it?" said Adrian challengingly. "You're no show-off!"

Matey was silent.

The earth, tumbling headlong in its daily revolution, shifted Rustdorf and their window so that the sunlight laid a friendly ray on their faces.

"I hope the sun is shining like this all along the border in northern France on all the other returned refugees," said Matey, sending them one by one a comradely thought.

"Why limit it to northern France?" suggested Adrian half absently.

The door of their room opened softly. Petella's eye appeared around it. "Oh, goody, Maman, you're awake. I'm just *éreintée*, trying to keep Brother in. Can we go out?"

Her parents looked in astonishment at the city-bred child. "Why, haven't you got the sense you were born with?" Adrian asked her. "Don't you know you're *home*, outdoors as well as in!"

Petella withdrew herself with a shout and clattered down the stairs, calling to Brother.

"They *mustn't* forget their *rubbers!*" A reflex instinct in Matey uttered this cry. She sprang out of bed, clutched a wrapper about her, shuffled her feet into slippers, and ran downstairs just in time to recall the reluctant children from the damp front walk.

After rubbers were found and put on—rather a painful process, because Brother shied off violently from going near the hall closet where Petella had put his rubbers the night before—

Matey thought, "I might as well put the water on for coffee, so it can be heating while I dress." Busy in the kitchen, she heard Adrian in the cellar shaking down the furnace. A new day had begun.

When breakfast was over Petella dragged them all out, informing them that they hadn't any idea what a lovely day it was.

She was right. It was a morning fine beyond words to express, as fine mornings always are. It went to the children's heads. They ran around and around in a frenzy, trying to be everywhere and see everything and feel everything at once. Brother was as effervescent as Petella, his eyes brilliant, no lightest shadow on his face.

As Matey and Adrian came around from the back yard to the front, there before them, painted by sun and shadow and April air, the many-colored strip of their outdoor frieze hung between trees and lawn. A couple of long-legged boys glided by on bicycles, the spokes of the wheels glittering as they turned, making a staccato run of small bright reflections. Behind them an oil truck lumbered slowly forward, its crude scarlet like a trumpet note. Against its steady bulky advance a flock of little children on their way to school scurried along the sidewalk, hopping and skipping in an irregular rhythm like grace-notes. In the Deyo side yard a line of drying clothes, pink, blue, green, red, children's garments, fluttered in the wind. Older children strung themselves out along the frieze—Lucy with books under her arm. She smiled with lips and eyes and waved her hand at Aunt Matey—and gave a skip afterward like the littler ones.

A couple of neighbors passed, older men on their way to business, fathers and uncles of Adrian's contemporaries, distant relatives. Members of the Meeting, both of them.

Seeing the Forts standing together in the side yard, they smiled a greeting to Matey and called heartily, "Hey there, Adrian! Glad to see thee home again!"

Adrian called back, "How are you, Cousin Al?" and "You're looking fine, Mr. Winthrop." In his voice was a sort of surprise as if he had forgotten that transparent men existed.

Clamors and shrieks from the children made them turn their heads. Petella was showing her Gallicized small brother what to do with a slanting cellar door. "Brother seems all right this morning," said Adrian, looking at the little boy's glowing face.

"What was that Cousin Connie said about you as a little girl—that your face was as bright as a nasturtium? I hope he's forgotten all about that misery of last night, whatever it was."

Matey told him then about Brother's refusal to go near the hall closet and tried to describe the painful darkening of his eyes as he looked across the hall at its door.

Adrian's own eyes darkened as he said, "Still got it with him, then, hidden away somewhere . . . probably always will have. Something he's got to get used to living with from now on. . . . Oh, well, it's the common lot. We've got the war."

Petella called frantically from the other side of the yard, "Maman! Papa! Come quick!"

She was kneeling by a flower bed, Brother sitting on his heels beside her, looking down to where she was surrounding something lovingly with her two hands. As her parents came up, "See that!" she said. And taking her hands away she showed the shining green of a tulip leaf's spear-head pushing its way with an almost visible vitality through the dark moist earth. "It's alive!" she told them. "It's been here in the ground all the time we were away, waiting for us to come back."

Petella will always find something waiting for her, thought her mother.

Brother still squatted beside her, a hand on each knee, looking down gravely at the up-pointed finger of the leaf and keeping his counsel about what it said to him. He never was so transparent as his sister.

"Innocent and disdainful above all those strata of sour dead!" murmured Adrian.

He pulled out his watch. "Oh, are you going to the bank right away? Now? This very morning?"

He nodded.

He stooped to kiss his children, kissed his wife like any husband going to any day's work, and walked resolutely off down the street. The children ran away to see something in the back yard. Matey stood looking after her husband, going to the obscure, anonymous work which was his future.

After he had disappeared she dropped her eyes absently to the ground. Crowding thick about her feet was new grass, every blade glistening with vitality. How eagerly it renewed itself! Before even the old willow. No. Lifting her head, she saw that the battered aged tree under which Sumner lay buried was already showing green. The elms, too—last night in the twilight she had thought them leafless. So they were. But now the morning clearness showed, entangled in their twigs, a veil of transparent color—*couleur de vie,* she thought, looking at them and at the maples, envying the silent tide of life which, even as she looked, must be flooding up from their roots. Everything in sight seemed to be beginning all over again.

No, not everything. The old beech which was Brother's foster-father stood stark in mid-winter bleakness. For all that the eye could see it was dead, dead to its last fiber. Motionless as a dead thing too, Matey thought, walking over to it and remembering the wild energy of its battle with the storm and how it had helped her in her own battle with the anguish which had given her a son. She put out a hand to touch the great mottled gray trunk. It felt hard and dense as a column of stone and said to her, "Stand fast!" It stood fast, clutching its great roots into the ground, patiently enduring its apparent death, while around it all its comrades with pale visages stood up out of their graves.

How did the intimation of new life come? she wondered. Was there a thrill of all its cells at once as the buds swelled and opened? Or a rush of sap from the roots like blood returning to a drained-out heart? Or perhaps, as the rising tide of life flowed here and there along its inscrutable channels, it touched for an instant the tip of some deeply buried root, stirring its fibers to a vibration so fine that no more than a dreamy echo of it reached the tree's great crown.

The children called her to share their delight in finding the weather-beaten remnants of their sand pile and forgot her at once as they began eagerly to put in order its circling border of bricks fallen away into ruins. She watched them for a moment, hoping that Ziza's returned little refugees were as happy. Then, thinking of Ziza, she walked away and sat down on the edge of the porch, leaning her head against one of the pillars.

The sun was warm. She was sheltered from the wind. She sat so still that presently mingled with the children's voices came an occasional brief purposeful remark passed between a pair of phoebes that were building a nest under one corner of the porch roof.

At first she thought of things to be done—their trunk perhaps now at the station to be brought to the house and unpacked—and was old Cousin Charlie Van Blommer still the expressman—and some food needed to be bought for lunch— But presently her bodily quiet emptied her mind of trivialities and left it still and vacant. After a time of vague staring up into red blossoms of the soft-maple tree and listening to the faint hum of early insects murmuring their way from flower to flower, she thought, "I haven't been as quiet as this—waking—not since the last time I went to Meeting."

Into the stillness of her emptied mind a thought, very clear, complete in words as few of her thoughts were, dropped as concretely as a stone dropping into a pool. "I know exactly how Adrian feels," she told herself. "The war has made him feel about all the world as I did about Mother and Father before I knew—knew that there was so much more—that they hadn't intended that, that it was only a mistake they'd made."

This time she did not ask herself shyly and humbly whether it was perhaps childish and silly to reason thus from small to great, to interpret the world's catastrophe from her own small experience. She looked down at the spot where the tiny owl's feather had lain, thought, "No, there is no small or great in what's true," and sat staring at the circles widening from that thought.

When Adrian's father came down the path toward her he scarcely stirred the surface of her quiet, telling her gently, "Don't move. Don't move. It does me good to see thee sitting still. I only came to see if Adrian is ready to—"

"He's gone already," she answered. "He's very—he's not yet—I think he couldn't wait to get back to work."

"Ah," said Adrian's father thoughtfully. He had taken off his hat and now lifted his white head and age-ravaged face toward the sky. Matey followed his gaze and saw what he was looking at, a dark V of wild ducks headed north and flying fast.

He watched the birds out of sight and then, looking down at her said, "Adrian thinks the war is an indictment of the universe. Instead of a mistake men make."

"Oh, Padre, if you could only make him feel that!"

He shook his head. "Thee's the only one to do that."

At her startled *"I!"* he sat down beside her, saying, "Thee's done it once for Adrian."

She said again, *"I!—for Adrian?"* It was a reversal of all her thoughts of Adrian.

The old man told her, "Years ago, when there was a bitter passage of his life before him, and nothing I could do to help—while I was dreading it, thee came walking into his life—that very day."

Matey's mind went back with incredulous astonishment to that well-remembered day and to the strengthless girl, walking about like an automaton, whom Adrian had brought back to life. "What thee did for him then—and ever since—" went on her father-in-law meditatively, looking down and stirring absently with his foot a tuft of grass. "I wonder does thee know the lines,

" 'As in old time
A head with gentle grace
All tenderly laid by thine
Taught thee the nearness of the love divine—' "

Matey's shamed protest rose into words. "No, *no,* Padre," she said, nervous and abashed, "don't think I'm like that. I'm—I'm not, at all. I don't even understand such ideas. 'The nearness of the love divine'—honestly, I haven't any idea what those words mean."

"They don't mean anything theological," said Adrian's father mildly. "I never mean anything theological." He stood up to go "As for understanding—" He looked around him, saw the naked beech standing fast, and said, "I don't suppose that old fellow understands very much about where its roots find food." Seeing her face still full of startled denial, he said like a grown person affectionately mocking a child's ignorance, "What did thee think such a life as thine and Adrian's was rooted in?" He put on his hat, asked, "Or did thee perhaps think it had no roots at all?" and went away as quietly as he had come.

"But I *don't* understand!" Matey murmured obstinately to herself, watching his retreating back. "He can talk that way all he likes. I never have understood religious ideas."

She tried to consider this. But sitting so long blankly and passively in the sun had put the upper layer of her brain to sleep. "The nearness of the love divine," she said vaguely, wondering what it could mean, but she could not arouse herself to drive away by thoughts the meaning which lay still and golden about her, warm as the silent sunshine.

"No," she told herself finally, giving it up, "I have no head for abstract ideas. I'm good for nothing but to plod along, one step after another, following the windings of the path wherever it leads."

As if in sequence from this chance phrase came an idea so inconsequent that she was astonished to find it in her mind. "I wonder if the ants are out yet this spring?" she asked herself abruptly and absurdly and looking down saw, sure enough, a busy tiny creature fetching and carrying to a hole near her feet. Why in the world had she thought of—oh, yes, the notion of following a path had made her think of Biriatou and then of the ant she had watched so many years ago on another ideal April morning, leaning on the back terrace wall, eating a *tartine* with such gusto. This memory was so real that in this floating musing haze she scarcely knew which she was now, the little girl leaning over the wall, or the woman whose own children murmured happily in the sun as they reconstructed something that had been spoiled. She was both, of course. The little girl sat here listening with a contented sympathy to the other children's voices; the woman leaned over the wall in her past—and now lifted her head from the laboring ant, looked out again over the miles and miles of blossoming broom, and thought again how different it looked when you were up above it from the way it was when you were down in it, sunk below the tops of the unlovely, rough bushes, valueless millions of them, anonymous and obscure as human lives, like them earth-rooted, thorny, dark, a few sparse blossoms scattered along their years. And it was the woman who was on the look-out rock again, a fresh wind blowing in her face, the great wind of the high places, from which as far as the eye can see there stretches out illimitable living gold.

The phoebes flew in and out, more and more boldly over the head of the motionless woman. Her eyes were wide open, but she sat as still as though she had fallen asleep.

She had instead fallen awake, knew again the startled waking to complete vision out of the half-sleep of ordinary life, as she had known it once as a little girl at a concert, once as a young wife. With a startled flutter the phoebes darted back from the porch as the woman rose suddenly to her feet. After she had walked down the path to the street they returned cautiously to their nest-building.

It was only for a moment that Matey was surprised to find herself not on the porch but on the sidewalk under the elms. She knew in an instant why she was there, what impulse had sent her hurrying, to share with Adrian—to tell him—

She walked more slowly. To tell him? She could no more tell him than one tree can make another share the renewed life which thrills along a deeply buried root.

She walked more slowly still. She could not only not tell him. She could not keep it herself. It was going from her. She was not big enough to hold it fast. She felt it going back whence it had come, back into the myriad sources from which for an instant it had drawn the stuff of understanding—back into the owl's tiny feather—and into those words of Adrian's father which she did not understand—and into Biriatou with its paths that led home and its by-paths that led to terror—and into Mme. Vinet's long resolute look into a remediable future—and into her children's play with bricks—and into the memory of the anguish of childbirth—and into her father's dying voice. It was leaving her, the emotion and the certainty of this last awakening; it was streaming up into the leafless trees like a mist, sinking into the ground like rain. But as it went it transformed everything. That radiant meaning—it was no longer within her, but all about her. The trees looked down upon her, as the tulips had looked up so long ago, with a kind conscious wisdom as if to promise they would not let her forget.

And now it was all quite gone. She had only the memory of it. She was no more than Matey Gilbert, on the sidewalk of Washington Street, in her small home town, walking toward the savings bank where her husband worked. For she continued to walk steadily forward to find Adrian. She would keep nothing for herself, not even a memory; she would have nothing she could not share with Adrian. But when she tried to put even her memory into speech she found among the millions of human words only one and another battered copper symbol of the gold she had seen. Put into words, what was it she wanted to tell her husband? Fragments of it could perhaps be forced into speech—that it takes anguish to bring new life to birth; that the war had not shaken the bases of human life but only made them visible; that human beings die tragically, having no more time left to repair their mistakes, but that their deep-rooted race goes on, goes on into new springtimes; that to have missed for a time the right path and to be lost in a by-path is no ground for terror; that the only despair lies in thinking that one's life is all, in not seeing the vastness of which it is a part—the preacher-like sound of that last phrase gave her a warning. No, no, this would not do. She was maligning by her awkwardness with words the might and majesty of the life-current which had passed through her.

She tried again. She had quite missed the very core of what had happened to her, the knowledge that there is no small and great, that what Adrian had planned to do with his life, the obscure anonymous helpful work to which he had resigned himself, was all there was, the best there was, and gloriously enough. If she could make him see it—all those anonymous millions of human lives, each with a poor flower or two—what if you could not see the golden whole! There it was, miles and miles, of beauty, ever renewed.

She stopped short, shuddering away from the misshapen clumsy metaphors which were all she could find. It was unfaith to that memorable certainty of wholeness to try to put it into speech. She had no skill with words. Had she ever yet in all her married life found a single one that would tell Adrian anything of what she deeply felt?

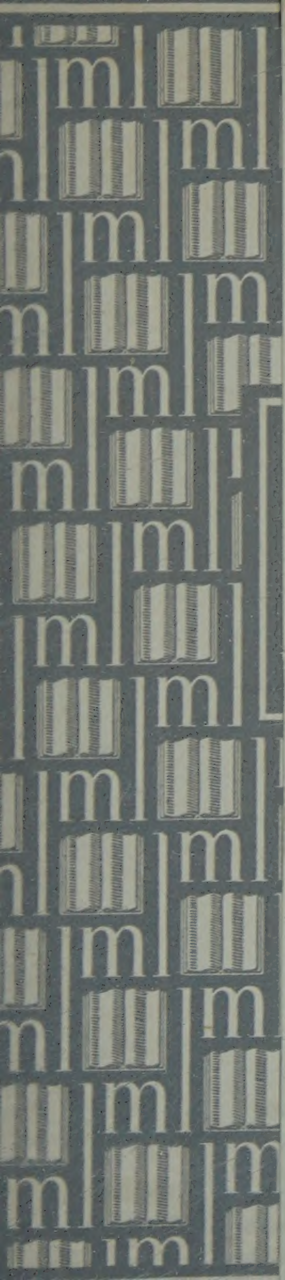
Her years with Adrian answered that question, stood before her, beckoning her on. She walked forward again. Had Adrian ever needed words to share with her all she had learned from him? The medium for the communion of the spirit is not words, but life.

At this, literal reality closed in around her with its opaque walls. All that was left of her memory was a manageable purpose not in the least mystic or hard to put in speech. She thought, "My job in life just now is to keep Adrian from making of work and cheerfulness a dreary substitute for joy. It's the other way around with us from the way it used to be—I seem to have more capacity now for joy than he. It's something that can't be talked about, but if we share life wholly, if we work together, why, whatever's in my life will be in his."

She went up the steps and pushed open the door. Adrian was with his father in the inner office. Hearing the door shut behind her, he came to see who was there and looked at her through the cashier's window. At the idea that she would soon be in there beside him, an exclamation of pleasure, clad in innocent childishness like one of Petella's, sprang into her mind. "It's going to be *nice* to work together!"

Aloud she said, "Oh, Adrian, I thought I'd run in to tell you that after you left I got to thinking about your father's idea, and of course I want to take that job. It'll be the best thing in the world for me. As soon as ever I get the children settled in school I'm coming to start work."

At the deepening of his eyes, at his long breath—she had not dreamed he wanted her so!—"It takes so long for me to get anything through my head," thought Matey humbly.



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